

LAURA JEAN LIBBEY'S

WOODEN
WIVES





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✓ LATEST AND GREATEST ROMANCE

WOODEN WIVES ✓

IS IT A STORY FOR
PHILANDERING HUSBANDS?

✓
By the Author of
JIL-BETT ✓
—



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WOODEN WIVES

CHAPTER I

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN'S LURING SMILE

“Where lives the man who has not tried,
How mirth can into folly glide,
And folly into sin.”

THERE are few, past the flush of early youth, who do not feel a keen sympathy for the erring wretch who besieged Heaven with the prayer:—

“Oh, God, turn back the wheel of time,—and let me live my past again!”

They are philosophers who resign themselves to the belief, human beings must go through the vicissitudes allotted to them at birth; that it is useless to fight against them, being unable to turn their course ever so little to undo what has been done, or divert what is feared *might* occur.

They realize, no one can fore-tell what a day may bring forth; that the delights of today, are not those of tomorrow;—and the luscious apple of pleasure can turn to dead-sea-fruit on the lip;—each moment of existence being likened to grains of sand slipping through the hour-glass of Time;—a silent warning to make the most of life, love, hope, and joy while they tarry with us.

It had been a busy morning in the law office of

Senator Rae, No—, Broadway, New York. The large clock pointed to five minutes to twelve —noon hour.

The calendar on the desk of Edwards, chief clerk, contained a daily quotation; today it read:—"Ah, what a fatal web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." He wondered if Boyd, his assistant, had observed it.

"Huh! a guilty conscience needs no accuser," he thought, as, without appearing to do so, he noted the uneasiness of his assistant, and the trembling of his hands as he counted the stack of bank-notes before him.

Hugh Boyd was aware of Edwards' scrutiny. Was it only his fancy, or was the old confidential clerk, who stood but a few paces away,—between him and the open safe,—watching him furtively out of the corner of his eye? He hadn't turned a page, nor his back upon him for an instant during the past half hour. Edwards usually went out to luncheon first; today, he seemed to be lingering unnecessarily, much to the annoyance of his assistant, whose nerves seemed to be on edge on account of it.

It was time for closing the safe, with the moneys deposited therein,—that day's receipts. The situation was becoming desperate to Boyd.

"Is it raining?" he queried, hoping to divert the other's attention to the window—for ever so short a time.

"No!" was the curt rejoinder, as Edwards turned, facing him squarely,—“Rain would spoil the racing at Belmont Park today, eh!”

Boyd started visibly, grinding a silent imprecation between his white teeth; not trusting himself to reply. With swift ledgerdemain, at which he was an adept, he stacked the bank-notes together, crossing to the safe.

Edwards bent forward, watching keenly, noting two five hundred dollar bills which had been on *top* of the pile, were shifted to the *bottom*.

IT WAS TO BE AN UNEQUAL TEST OF AN OLD MAN'S VISION, AND A YOUNG MAN'S SKILL. Edwards could not tell if ALL the money went into the safe, or—if some—*did not*. "I will not lunch today, you can go as soon as you like," he announced.

Boyd hesitated, as though undecided; then, with a keen, penetrating glance at Edwards, bolted hurriedly for the door.

Edwards' eyes followed the young man until the door closed after him. Boyd had returned that morning from his vacation; it annoyed Edwards that he should ask for that afternoon off—after he caught sight of the sporting page in the morning paper.

His attention was called to a messenger, entering. "The report of the expert accountant, sir," he said. There had appeared slight discrepancies on Boyd's books. Senator Rae ordered they must be gone over during the assistant's absence.

As the senator was in Washington, it was Edwards' duty to look over the report. As he ran his eye over it, consternation seized him;—Boyd's books revealed an amazing defalcation. He realized he must summon the senator home at once because of it.

He turned to the safe to close that first,—then drew back with a hoarse cry. Was he mad!—or,—dreaming! the safe was—EMPTY. A package of the senator's stocks and bonds, totaling half a million,—a fortune in cash to close a real-estate deal, and a large sum in gold notes placed in the senator's safe for safe-keeping by his friend Daniel Weslow, of Oklahoma,—to be called for that very afternoon—had—disappeared. When and how had it occurred? Edwards stared aghast at the empty safe. Every drop of blood in his veins seemed to turn suddenly to ice, his heart to stop beating. The contents of the safe had been intact when he placed a check therein, scarcely half an hour before.

It had been rifled before his very eyes, despite his careful watching. Frenzied, he rushed to the door to apprehend Boyd; he was nowhere in sight. He rushed to the phone. The senator had just sat down to luncheon in the New Willard, in Washington. Edwards never afterward remembered in what words he told what had occurred.

Senator Rae, answering, sensed at once, that nothing short of a calamity could put his confidential man in such a state of excitement.

He replied he would be just in time to catch an outgoing train, and on reaching New York, would come directly to the office.

As the express whirled on to the metropolis, the senator had time aplenty—to think. The trouble had to do with Boyd's books. Lately, he had heard whispers concerning the life his clerk was leading—

frequenting cabarets, questionable resorts, race-tracks, etc., with companions of both sexes of unsavory repute.

Boyd's year would be up at the end of that month; he had made up his mind to dispense with his services then. His law-office was not the place for any employee save a person of undoubted integrity.

Meanwhile Edwards was pacing the office up and down with growing anxiety. Would it mean his dismissal? He had served the senator faithfully and well from youth to old age. How was he to go home to his dear old wife—his sons, and daughters, and try to explain to them what had occurred;—that the valuable contents of the safe, of which he had had charge, had vanished. Should he have taken it upon himself to send for the police and apprehend Boyd ere he could make a get-away from the city?

Had he stepped to the window, and looked after his assistant, he would have seen that which would have added greatly to his anxiety.

Boyd had but just reached the pavement ere he heard his name called from the direction of an automobile a few rods away.

One glance at the occupant, who was alighting from the car, and he sprang quickly to her side, exclaiming:—"Pauline!—my darling!"

"Hughey!" returned Pauline Rae, the senator's daughter, "what an unexpected encounter; I did not know you were back."

He seized the girl's hands holding them tightly clasped in his own.

"I have but just gotten in, Pauline, and was on my way to the nearest booth to call you up, dear," lied Boyd,—adding, "I was about to beg the opportunity of seeing you at the earliest possible moment. Fate was kind in answering my prayer."

The girl's dimpled face flushed with pleasure under his adroit flattery, and the spell of his dark eyes. At seventeen girls are not good judges of words that spring from the heart, or whether they are mere lip-service.

"How radiantly charming you look, Pauline," he murmured, his quick glance taking in every detail of the dainty white silk sports suit, white ties, and white sailor hat with the filmy white veil wound round it that half concealed,—and half revealed the bronze-gold curls, and shading as pretty a pair of sparkling blue eyes as ever looked out from a rose-bud face.

"Looking at you, so fair, so sweet, and lovable, I often almost doubt my senses, that I have been so fortunate as to have won your heart, Pauline.—It was so cruel that I dared not write you while I was away. I counted the hours until I should see you again, dear."

"Foolish boy!" laughed Pauline. "If you were undergoing that self-imposed unhappiness, you could not have enjoyed your vacation."

"You were not there,—how could I?" this reproachfully.

The truth of the matter was, he had not intended phoning to Pauline until the following day,—or let her know he had returned.

Meeting her so unexpectedly was certainly a contre-temps he had not looked for;—while he talked, he was cogitating over some plausible excuse to break away from her, and beat it with all haste to the Belmont race-track which he had been bound for.

As he expected, Pauline invited him to jump into the car for a spin around the park. “You do not know how it grieves me to be unable to go, dear,” he said, “the fact is, I am sent on a most important matter by Edwards,—and every moment is precious.”

“Let me drive you to where you have to go, Hughey, we can talk as we ride,” she urged prettily.

“We certainly cannot stand holding hands here,” he declared. “If your father heard of it, what a row the old curmudgeon would kick up!”

The color left the girl's face, and the smile from her lips; she drew her hands hastily from his grasp, tears in her eyes.

He realized his rash folly instantly; ere he could rectify it Pauline rebuked him in a voice freighted with emotion.

“Don't speak so of father,—you hurt me to the heart's core. He is the dearest, noblest man in all the world. He has been father, mother, all to me; my happiness is dearer to him than anything else on earth.”

“Depend upon it, Pauline, your father would never give you to me—a poor clerk in his employ; despite all he's worth, he'd have you marry money—for instance that uncouth westerner—Weslow, he hob-nobs with.”

The girl laughed heartily,—as only a young girl who has never known care or sorrow, can laugh. “Mr. Weslow! ridiculous! why, he’s twice my age. His odd ways amuse me; but, as to marrying him,—oh, Hughey, how can you suggest such a thing. Neither father, or Mr. Weslow ever imagined any thing of the kind.”

“I humbly beg your pardon, dear; a lady and a clown, as lovers, is preposterous. I’d be jealous of any man who admired you,” declared Boyd.

His acquaintance with the little heiress had come about in this way: Needing a stenographer to aid him in preparing speeches which had to be made ready for immediate delivery, the senator had taken Boyd to his home evenings for the purpose; it did not occur to him that the handsome young man was, in this way, brought into contact with his young daughter.

His mind was so crowded with legal complications, he lost sight of the fact that there is a natural attraction between young people. From time immemorial they have looked, dreamed,—and—loved.

The romance budded, and blossomed under Senator Rae’s nose, but he had not the slightest inkling of it.

Mrs. Holt, an aged widow who presided over the widower’s palatial home soon noted Pauline’s interest in the young man, and disapproved of it. She had taken a dislike to Hugh Boyd, though she could have given no good reason for it, save her woman’s intuition. It was simply a case of:—

“I do not like you Doctor Fell,
The reason why, I cannot tell?”

The romance ripened quickly. Pauline had never realized she had a heart, 'till she was conscious of its loss. Tender, lingering glances and heart throbs led to clinging hand-clasps,—then low spoken words, and notes hidden among flowers;—love-notes, as only a man adept at love-making could write;—and the mischief was done. They were sweethearts, yet dared not proclaim it, because Boyd feared the Senator's wrath—when it came to making inquiries concerning the life he was leading.

It was one thing to make love to a pretty, trusting young girl, but quite another to stand up before a cold, stern father, and have the temerity to ask for his daughter in marriage. Boyd knew better than to risk it.

As he stood there, on the pavement, holding Pauline's hands, and looking down into her blushing face, he was wondering which would be the better course to pursue,—ask her to marry him at once,—a case of Now or never,—or,—wait until after the races;—it would only be a question of a couple of hours or so difference. He had determined upon one course, and that was, to shake the dust of the city from his feet before sun-down.

The chances were, Edwards would not open the safe the next morning, that day being a holiday and the banks closed.

There would be a wild time after the safe was opened. He would give himself until sun-down—not to think, or allow it to worry him.

As he stood there cogitating, the call of the races was stronger than the desire to wed Pauline,—that could wait until afterward.

Pauline was urging to take him to his destination, he concluded it would be wise to consent. “I cannot resist the temptation to be by your side, dear,” he responded, assisting her into the car and springing in after her. “You may take me over the Brooklyn Bridge, dropping me there, dear. I will reach it all too soon; I almost wish I hadn’t let you take me over,” he added a moment later, “it is maddening to be so near you, and restrain the impulse—”

He stopped short suddenly, staring hard at a string of horses they were passing. “Good Lord! I’ll bet my hat that is Papyrus and Nev entered in today’s race!” he ejaculated excitedly.

Pauline pouted, nettled at the thought that anything could divert from herself, his attention in the very midst of love-making. He was quick to see he had offended, and make amends, whispering all the tender, sentimental speeches very young girls, bewildered by their first romance, delight to hear. Meanwhile, his eye was on every clock they passed; he could hardly conceal his impatience. He had intended to hurry to his room, divesting himself of everything in his pockets—except the cash. Meeting so unexpectedly with Pauline, changed his plan;—he would be obliged to take with him to the track,—about his person, valuable stocks and bonds. This bothered him,—but only for a moment, in the next, he was speculating over the result of his afternoon at the races. He had

never been able to risk much, previously, but today, —ah!

While he sat beside her, completely absorbed in brilliant anticipation, Pauline was chatting gaily, unconscious of the fact she did not have a listener. In after time, Boyd was intensely annoyed with himself for NOT having heard one word she had uttered.

“Oh, Hughey!” Pauline was saying, “I must tell you of a young girl, just from Paris, who is coming to stay a few weeks with me. You’ll be sure to like her, she’s so,—how shall I describe her,—different from other girls.”

This was the only sentence he caught. He recovered himself with a start. “The girl from Paris will not interest me a particle,” he declared. “I spent my month’s vacation there two years ago, and was bored to death. You are the only girl on earth who has held, or ever will hold any interest for me, dear,—my own, my peerless Pauline.”

“Do you mean you never admired, or took a liking to any girl but me?” she queried naïvely.

“You have said it; you are my first, and will be my only love,” he declared without so much as the quiver of an eyelid as he boldly uttered the untruth, he whose amours had been legion; so many he could not recollect all the pretty women he had whistled down the wind, as he was wont to phrase it. He could scarcely refrain from bursting out into a hearty laugh as he noted how implicitly Pauline believed in him.

“Just one word more, at parting, dear,” he whispered as he sprang out of the car. “Sometime this

afternoon I shall send you a note in a bouquet, and the words will tell you the prayer in my heart.'"

The next instant he was gone. Pauline turned her car homeward, her heart all in a flutter.

As Boyd swung himself aboard the crowded express, which was just pulling out, he encountered his closest pal, Jack Reardon, a degenerate young lawyer who was also bound for the same objective point. He fairly gasped at the huge roll of bills Boyd produced when he reached the track.

It was to be an international day in the annals of the turf. The most famous thorough-bred horses, kings and queens of the speed-world, had been assembled to take part in this, the greatest races that would be run this season. Boyd was wildly enthusiastic over it. At last the great race of the day was on; Boyd had bet recklessly on the result, to the full extent of his pile—an amount which caused the oldest habitues of the track amazement, to say the least.

There was much speculation as to whom he could be; no one seemed to know; they concluded he was some millionaire's son who had just come into a fortune. Usually, the first act of such youths was, to visit the race track, leaving much of their wealth there. Never was there a greater test of speed. The excitement was intense as the four horses started; shouts, yells, and plaudits of the spectators added to the turmoil as the last lap was reached, and the two foremost horses, noses even, made the final dash for the pole; half a moment more—and it was over. Amid the wild tumult of shouts; Boyd had seen the horse he had wagered a fortune on,—lose.

He staggered up to Reardon, whispering, "I'm wiped out!—broke!"

"No use crying over spilled milk," returned Reardon tersely.

"I've a trump-card to play," whispered Boyd huskily, "I've got just enough cash left—to get married on—"

Reardon interrupted him with a shriek of laughter.

Without noticing the other's mirth, he went on:—"I want you to manage the affair for me, Reardon. Engage the minister of The Little Church Around The Corner, to be in his rectory at five-thirty this afternoon, to perform the ceremony. You will know how to meet the requirements of the licence bureau;—it must be O. K."

Reardon gazed at him quizzically, as though he quite believed he had taken leave of his senses. "You!—MARRY! ha!ha!ha!" he exploded. "Which beautiful woman, with the alluring smile, has put you in that notion? I did not suppose any of the beauts you and I have been traveling around with, was so foolish as to go down with a sinking ship! Do I know her?"

"You do *not* know her. She's Pauline Rae—at present."

"An—elopement!—the daughter of Senator Rae!" gasped the astounded Reardon. Boyd nodded.

"Holy smokes! Well, by the eternal, you sure are the luckiest of cusses!" ejaculated Reardon, "I believe if some one kicked you in th' gutter, you'd pick up a handful of gold-pieces lost there. You bet I'll attend to the affair;—but,—say!—what's there in it for me, when you're hitched to all that money!"

“As Senator Rae’s son-in-law, I can put you on your feet again.”

“If I ever *do* get up again, I’ll have a score to settle with one Daniel Weslow, my enemy, who got me disbarred, out in Oklahoma because of a little deal I pulled off.”

“So!—Weslow has put his oar in *your* affairs *too*, has he? I did not know you knew him. He’s in love with the heiress, and Rae favors him—he came on from the west a few days ago, I hear.”

“But the girl—”

“Is in love with *me*,” cut in Boyd. If the senator had the least idea of it, he’d make it hot for me. Once tied to the girl, he can rage as much as he likes,—he cannot untie the knot. There are mighty urgent reasons, Reardon, why the marriage must take place this afternoon. By nightfall, I will have shaken the dust of New York from my feet! Pauline goes with me—she’ll be my—white flag, we’ll say.”

Reardon remembered the roll of money Boyd had been possessed of when he came to the track, and made a shrewd guess—as to *how he came by it*.

Boyd did not make a confidante of Reardon, regarding the turmoil that would ensue when Edwards opened the safe. It would rest between the two of them. Senator Rae would not be likely to accuse—HIM—on his daughter’s account, therefore, it would mean a long prison term for the old clerk who had so enraged him by his distrust, and careful espionage.

At the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street Boyd and Reardon parted; the latter to attend to his mis-

sion, while Boyd entered a near-by florist's shop. He selected a small bunch of violets, Pauline's favorite flowers;—in the heart of which, he slipped the following hastily penciled note:—

“Pauline, my darling:—Meet me at once, at our usual rendezvous. No one suspects. Awaiting you, dear, with the utmost impatience, will be—

Your lover—”

Boyd smiled; he knew he could count on Pauline coming; she would not fail him. He would not have felt so complaisant about lingering until nightfall had he known what was taking place at that moment in Senator Rae's private office.

He had arrived in New York, and lost no time in reaching his office, and Edwards. One glance at his face, and he knew he must be prepared for an unusual denouement.

When he learned the extent of the calamity which had befallen him, he sunk down on the nearest chair, gasping out, as he smote his desk with his clenched hand. “My God! Edwards such a loss will—*ruin me!*—my—client's money!—my own stocks and bonds,—and such a large sum belonging—to—Weslow! Summon the police without a moment's delay; put the case in their hands, giving them all the information you can, concerning it;—I will talk with the chief later. Leave me alone to think it out.” As Edwards reached the door, he called sharply after him:—“You have no time to lose; this fellow Boyd has hours the start of us.”

Both heard a voice in the outer office.

"It is Daniel Weslow," whispered Edwards in trepidation.

"He has come for his—money! Tell him to call later," Senator Rae muttered hoarsely—his old clerk quitted the room, hurriedly.

Left to himself the senator dropped his head in his hands with a mighty groan. From out of a clear sky, ruin had fallen upon him. The large sum of money Boyd probably used, to make a speedy get-away. The stocks and bonds he might secrete for years,—or ruthlessly destroy, if he found difficulty in disposing of them. Which ever way he looked at it, disaster stared him in the face. At that moment of desperation, through his confused brain came the remembrance, that, in a secret drawer in the desk,—was—a weapon.

His groping hand reached out toward it.

Edwards put in his head at the door which he had forgotten to get up and lock, saying:—"Mr. Weslow insists upon seeing you, sir." His gaze lingered pitiably on his employer. It hurt him to the heart's core to see the grand old senator with his splendid dignity and pride,—crushed, and in so pitiable a condition—he was frightened.

"What word shall I take Mr. Weslow, sir," he asked. As he spoke, and ere the senator could reply, a tall form loomed up in the door-way behind Edwards and a cheery voice exclaimed:—

"I took the liberty of following in,—I'm in a mighty big hurry, senator," said Daniel Weslow, advancing.

Summoning all of his will-power to his aid, Rae

nodded, forcing a smile to his lips as he attempted to rise, and hold out his hand.

“Not feeling well?” queried Weslow, grasping, and shaking it heartily, then seated himself in a chair opposite:—“I’m mighty sorry to see you in this way; can I do anything for you?”

Rae shook his head. “Only a bad spell; I get them once in a while.”

“I won’t stay long to bother you, senator,—saying my say in a few words:—It’s just this, sir:—there’s a mighty fine property out my way, going under th’ hammer this afternoon—within an hour’s time. I’m aiming to buy it,—paying cash down—by telegraph. It’ll be a mighty fine wedding present—for Pauline,—from me. Now senator,” he went on energetically, “you’ve done all th’ courting ’tween your daughter an’ me; mebbe it’s as you say; they do it that way in th’ east, but I’m blamed if I don’t like our western way best. Out there in God’s country, a man has no use for a go-between to help him to marry th’ girl he picks out. You’ve let me understand, often enough, Pauline’s going to marry me when you say th’ word, an’ *I’m asking you to say it right now*. I go back west day-after-tomorrow, an’ aim t’take Pauline back with me—Mrs. Daniel Weslow.

“I know I’m a great, husky, thirty-five year-older, not half good enough for your little girl, but I tell you this, sir:—the hour she marries me, I’m going to put everything I own in God’s world right into her little white hand,—signed right over to her. She’s the world to me. I never dreamed a man could love a

girl so much, leastways, that *I* ever could. Why, she could walk right over my heart rough-shod; Pauline could have my heart's blood, every drop of it, if she wanted it.—that tells you how dear she is to me. She shall not miss anything by going from you, to come to me. She'll not be exchanging a great love for a lesser one.—Life is empty to me without her; I can't stand this any longer.—That's what has brought me from the far west so unexpectedly.—Don't keep us apart any longer sir."

Senator Rae leaned back heavily in his seat, gripping the arms of his chair tensely;—his face had grown ashen, his lips twitched.

"Come up to the house tomorrow, and we'll talk it over, Weslow," he said huskily, his voice sounding scarcely human.

Daniel Weslow arose, gazing at him in alarm; he could see the senator was very ill. "I'm bringing in a doctor to look you over—within half an hour," he said. "Do the thinking about my buying the place I spoke of by that time; I'll be wanting the money; tell Edwards. It's a mighty fine place. I'll bet it'll please Pauline. We westerners work hard for what we want, an' we rush things. Why not let us marry to-day? Think that over too. They do say, delays are dangerous, you know."

Senator Rae watched Weslow with feverish intentness as he swung out of the door in his breezy western fashion, then, his shaking hand crept slowly toward the secret drawer.

CHAPTER II

IS LOVE NECESSARY WITH MARRIAGE?

“Sigh no more, lady—sigh no more!

Men were deceivers ever.

One foot on sea, and one on shore,

To one girl constant never.”

WHEN Pauline arrived home, Mrs. Holt, informed her the young lady she was expecting, was in the drawing-room. The tall, dark-eyed young person who came eagerly forward from the bay-window to greet her, startled her with her loveliness. She was almost a stranger to Pauline, her presence there came about in an unusual way:—

A fortnight before, Pauline had gone down to the wharf to greet a girl-friend arriving from abroad. She had been introduced to a young woman,—her friend had met on ship-board, who gave out that she was coming to America to procure employment connected with art, or something of that kind. Later, Pauline received a tear-stained note from her stating, as she had failed to find employment, and her funds had about given out, she would be obliged to go back to France.

Pauline's girl-friend being away, she had written to her, of her great disappointment, and to bid her Adieu. Pauline took the letter to her father, importuning him to allow her to invite the young girl to her home. In

the end, Pauline had her way, and she wrote immediately to the young girl to—"come and visit her as long as she liked."

The art-student from France, telegraphed her acceptance, and that she would arrive the following day.

"Oh, how dear and sweet it was of you to open your wonderful heart, and your beautiful home to me," she murmured, catching Pauline's hand, and caressing it impulsively, "How can I ever show my gratitude,—ever love you enough to prove it!"

"You are not to try," laughed Pauline, who was easily flattered. At the time Pauline had met her at the wharf, she had not noticed that this young girl was anything like as good looking as she now found her to be. She remembered that she remarked she had been sea-sick all the way over," that accounted for it. "I am glad to have you with us, M'lle Valteau," she added.

"Wont you call me, Marcelle, and let me call you Pauline?" breathed the French girl, the dark, splendid eyes looking pleadingly into the lovely blue ones.

"I should like it, by all means," declared Pauline, her heart warming to the agreeable young stranger.

When two young girls "take to each other," their friendship is usually of rapid growth, knowing more of each other in an hour, than older women do in long months, often years of acquaintance.

Young girls are wont to confide in each other, becoming bosom-friends at once. These two girls were on such confidential terms, that within half an hour, as they sat cuddled up on the sofa together, Marcelle, had confided to her new-found friend, that the reason she

had been so eager to leave her dear France, was on account of an unreciprocated romance.

“I should like so much to hear about it,” sympathized Pauline, her coloring heightening, as she thought of her own romance,—but, unlike this girl’s, *her* love was reciprocated by her Hughey.

With a sigh on her lips, Marcelle murmured:—“Just a year ago, I met, in Paris, a young man, handsome, clever; a rapid wooer, soon he proposed marriage. I was deeply fascinated, consenting. In almost the same breath, he asked me,—how much money I would bring a husband. When I told him that I was earning my own living, and had but a modest sum laid by,—he looked the—anger in his heart. He borrowed my savings, saying he would return it doubled, at the end of the week;—instead, I received a note from him saying he was leaving France within the hour; that he had imagined I had wealth; he could not wed a poor girl, being without money himself.”

In that instant I felt for him only the bitterest contempt; I had been robbed as well as befooled.

That night I crept out on a bridge where the water was deepest and swiftest to decide what I should do. A strolling band of gipsies was crossing;—one grasped my arm; I screamed for aid, a pedestrian, crossing the bridge came quickly to my assistance—hewing down my assailants with every lunge of his powerful arm. They fled.

“Whom may I thank for this timely assistance?” I asked. “A smile lit up his strong, rugged face. “Never you mind, little girl,” he answered, “just consider me only a rough man,—but I aim never to turn

my back on a woman in distress." He had not even taken the trouble to glance at me, and was turning away when I queried:—"Are you not an—American?" He nodded assent.

"A prairie man."

With that, in a few swinging strides he was out of sight. I have seen his face in my dreams ever since. I do not know his name. Call me a foolish girl if you like, but, somehow, when I set sail for America, there was a hope in my heart I could not banish, that, although your country is so big—fate, destiny, call it what you will,—may bring us together.

"I sincerely hope so." They say:—"Whatever is to be, will be," encouraged Pauline.

The chiming of the clock in the corridor reminded Pauline it was four o'clock, and she must drive down to the office for a package of books. One was a French romance, and in that language. Marcelle would help her translate it. As they discussed it, she would in turn tell Marcelle of her own romance, how dearly Hughey loved her, and how fearful they were of her father's anger—and all because her dear Hughey—was poor. Just as if *that* mattered.

Excusing herself, and bidding her new friend rest until her return, Pauline ran hastily down the steps to her waiting car. She had just entered it when Boyd's bunch of violets was placed in her hand by the florist's boy. She found the note at once. With beating heart, she ran her eyes over it:—"Pauline, my darling:—meet me at our usual rendezvous. No one suspects our secret. Awaiting you, with the utmost impatience, will me,—Your lover——"

The note bore no signature, it needed none. Pauline was amused at the word rendezvous, which made it appear they had been meeting each other by appointment,—which was not the case. Hughey had always managed to happen along just as she was about to enter the park and she had been pleased to invite him for a spin around it.

The girl smiled as she started her car. Yes, she would go first to the office for the books, then pick up Hughey for an hour through the park. He had never before written quite such an urgent note; why did he wish to see her so particularly!—what if he meant—to—propose!

She planned in what words she would consent;—but,—gaining her father's would be a difficult matter? He might be against handsome, dapper Hughey, his idea of the sort of man he would like for a son-in-law being a man on the order of—the westerner, as she dubbed Daniel Weslow.

He had gone so far as to intimate to Pauline that he would assure the westerner she would accept him, if *he* could influence her to do so. Pauline had laughed, believing it to be one of the Senator's jokes, and thought no more of it.

She drove leisurely toward the office, little suspecting how her call there was to end.

The Senator sat motionless, just as Weslow had left him! In that dread hour he realized what he had done in allowing Weslow to dream on in a fool's paradise, of that, which, in all probability, would **never** take place.

He had a profound respect for Daniel Weslow; not only for his sterling qualities as a right living, honest, honorable man, but for his ability to accumulate a fortune, and not lose his head and his good sense in not squandering it. He knew, too, wine and women were not his failings. Weslow had worked his way up—a cow-boy, then engineer on the Rocky Mountain Express. He was in the rush for the Pike's Peak gold fields. He traded his stake for a plot of ground in Texas. A week later oil had been discovered on it, and he found himself a man of wealth over night. Then he bought an Oklahoma ranch. He might have had a peaceful enough life of it if business had not brought him east, and to Senator Rae.

Life was never the same to him after he met his daughter, Pauline. It was a case of attraction at first sight. He went back to his ranch in Oklahoma,—but he left his heart behind him.

As Senator Rae sat there, going over the matter, he felt he had done Weslow a great injustice in permitting him to hope for Pauline's love when he had not a chance. He was not the type of man that would appeal to her,—young girls were incapable of placing the true value of a diamond in the rough. Weslow had been investing so heavily in speculations in which the senator was interested, that he made light of what he considered the westerner's passing fancy. When Daniel Weslow confided to him his desire to marry his daughter, he was answered by an amused smile, but not a denial, he took the matter for granted. The state of affairs was definitely settled in his mind when, from the far west he

sent Pauline a book of views of Yellow Stone Park, for which she had written a polite note of thanks, signing it,

“Yours, Pauline.”

From the receipt of this note Daniel Weslow lived in a fool's paradise,—considering himself betrothed to the senator's daughter.

He wrote every week to the senator, but more than one-half of each letter, had to do with Pauline who had written him—“Yours, Pauline.”

“When I say the word, you can talk to Pauline about it, not before,” was always the senator's reply. He felt quite sure that time, and being brought into contact with some attractive western girl, would cause Weslow to forget his infatuation for his daughter.

He had been amazed at the hold love had taken upon this strong man's heart. This complicated matters. How was he to tell him of the loss of the large sum, in cash, that had been placed with him for safe-keeping, and in the next breath ruthlessly destroy his hopes of winning and wedding his daughter. Ah,—if Pauline could only have loved this man! In this hour; he wished it as ardently as Weslow did.

There was not one chance in a thousand that the stolen stocks and bonds would be recovered, which made it impossible to reimburse the clients whose money was in his hand. Disaster lay before him.—He could die content if Pauline was Weslow's wife.

A spasm of intense pain shot through his heart; for the instant he thought he was dying. How could he die and leave his beloved child to face all this.

“Pauline! Pauline!” he cried; as if in answer to his

mortal call,—Pauline, bright, joyous and smiling, danced merrily into the office.

She had come for her books, and was delighted to find her father there. “You dear old darling!” she exclaimed, bounding to his side, and throwing her arms about him with a bear like hug,—“back sooner than you expected! Did I hear you calling my name?”

His arms closed about her; he pressed her closely to his convulsively beating heart. “Yes, yes, dear!” he murmured, drawing her down to his knee, I want you, I called you, I need you;—I—was having one of my spells.”

“Oh, poor papa!” sobbed the girl in alarm, “I must send for a doctor!”

The senator put his hand quickly over her lips.

“You will do me more good than any doctor; I am glad you are come, I want so much to talk to you, my child.”

In as few words as he could command, he told her, not explaining how, or by whom,—that a dire loss had just come to him which he could not tide over,—and of the large sum of money which Weslow had left with him for safe-keeping, and—that Weslow had just come on from the west, for the express purpose of asking her to marry him. He had asked permission of him if he might woo, and wed her,—and, he added in a tense whisper—HE HAD GIVEN HIS CONSENT.”

Pauline flung his arms from about her, springing to her feet, in anger such as he had never could have imagined her capable of.

“You gave *YOUR* consent, but what about *ME!*

How *dared* you do such a thing!" she panted. "I was the one to have been consulted, and to tell him that I would NOT marry him,—no, not even if he were the last man on the earth. I would as soon think of tying myself to one of the Indians who roams the western plains—as that uncouth westerner!"

He held up his hand deprecatingly, to stem the torrent of her rage, but it was quite useless. "You would learn to love him, in time; his noble nature could not help but impress you, dear," he persisted earnestly.

"Love goes where Heaven directs!" retorted Pauline warmly.

"My child," he said—"You are as yet, heart whole, and fancy free; you have had no lover, you do not realize what a treasure is Weslow's affection, rough diamond as he is; he could win your love with opportunity—and time."

Pauline, whom he had thought of only as a child, crested her golden head defiantly, answering: "You are in error; I HAVE a lover!—and I will never marry any one else."

The words rang out like the clanging of discordant bells, falling like a crash on her father's ears. At that instant, the note from Boyd which Pauline had thrust into the bosom of her dress, became dislodged, fluttering down—landing directly in the senator's lap. Both he and Pauline made an instantaneous grab for it; his hand closed over it first.

To his astonishment, she grew furiously excited, attempting to grapple with him for its possession. He held her off firmly with his left hand; with his right,

he smoothed out the crumpled slip, his eye, at the same time, running over its contents.

Then—he rose slowly to his feet in mighty wrath, still clutching the girl firmly with his left hand, raising the other as though he would strike her. His eyes which had never before been turned upon her save in gentleness, and love, were glaring down upon her like living coals of fire;—the veins on his face and neck stood out like whip-cords, his face was livid, the breath coming in gasps from his purple lips.

Pauline cowered from him. Was this man, the incarnation of a mighty fury, the loving parent who had worshipped her so fondly and devotedly, all the years of her young life? In a frenzy, the like of which she had never before beheld, he cried hoarsely:—

“Who is this man, that my daughter, whom I thought as innocent of guile as a babe,—has stolen out of my house to meet clandestinely! What is the damnable secret between you to which he refers? Answer me, girl, or I will wring it from your lips by force if I can get it in no other way!”

“Father!” sobbed Pauline, shrinking from this apparition of mighty anger, “I—I—cannot tell you; and—and—betray the man I love!”

His talon-like grip tightened on her arm; the pain of it was intense but she made no moan, or cry, though her face grew pale as death.

“Speak!” thundered the senator, his right hand creeping toward the unused drawer; as he jerked it open, her horrified eyes beheld what it contained. She realized she must speak, to avert—a tragedy.

“It is—Hugh Boyd, father!” she whispered. She got no further. She had thought her father’s rage terrible before, but it was as nothing compared to the awful frenzy which possessed him at the mention of that name.

“Boyd!—the thief! the traitor who has just ruined me! The villain who, at this moment is fleeing to escape the police—and prison!”

“I do not believe you, father!—it is false. He is not guilty of a crime. It is not true!”

“Boyd is a thief, gambler, libertine!” went on the senator, bringing his clenched fist down hard on his desk. “He is all that is most foul and dishonorable. You, girl, are the first Rae, to bring shame upon that noble name. I will meet Boyd face to face,—and it will be either his life, or mine, so help me God!”

“Father!” shrieked Pauline, you do not realize what you are saying!” She saw his fingers close over the weapon. He drew it forth transferring it to his pocket, where his hand, clutching it, rested.

“Boyd will be swept from your path,—for all time,—I shall see to it that the prison doors will close after him; then you will know him as the scoundrel he is. In good time you will recover your senses, then you will comply with my one great desire; that which I make my prayer to you—marry Daniel Weslow.”

Ere she could utter the defiant rejoinder that rose to her lips, the senator’s hand suddenly loosened its hold; he reeled backward, a thin stream of blood trickling from his lips.

Pauline’s terrified cries brought Edwards quickly,

also Weslow and the doctor who had at that moment arrived.

"My arrival is most opportune," said Dr. Mead, opening his case hurriedly. Daniel Weslow crossed to Pauline, grasping her trembling hands, holding them closely in his strong ones, silently. In that moment words did not come to him.

Pauline broke away from him, flinging herself at her father's feet, clinging convulsively to his knees. Daniel tried to raise her, gently. Her grief was like the stab of a knife in his heart.

"He has had a severe shock," announced the doctor, adding, "his life hangs on a single thread."

"Oh, what would become of me if anything were to happen to Papa!" sobbed Pauline, wringing her hands in terror. She knew she had been the cause of the shock which had placed her father in this grave situation.

"You would be my care, Pauline," said Weslow bending over her tenderly, laying his strong hand on her bowed head.

Both he, and the doctor, saw the stricken man's eyes follow this action. They knew, as did Pauline, who was looking up into his face, that he heard, understood, and approved, though his lips refused to articulate.

"If it be your wish, senator, I will marry Pauline,—if she agrees, here and now, that you may know she has a protector to love and care for her—if a great—grief came to her," said Weslow earnestly.

There was no mistaking the answer in the burning, eager gaze the stricken man raised to Daniel Weslow's

face, the blood-flecked lips making a valiant effort to smile a glad assent.

“You SEE, Pauline,” said Daniel gravely, pointing to her father. “It is clearly evident to me—that is his desire,” remarked the doctor.

Pauline had risen slowly to her feet, and was watching her father intently.

By the greatest effort the senator turned that pleading gaze—that seemed to burn into her very soul, first to Weslow,—then to her. She sensed—he was praying her to consent to marry Daniel Weslow then and there,—she—whose heart, every throb of it,—he knew—belonged to another.

Doctor Mead stepped to her side. “You hold your father’s life in your hand,” he said, “you see it is his wish.”

“You mean—if I refuse—it would cause my—father’s death!” she breathed hoarsely—“if—I—marry Mr. Weslow, you believe—the witnessing of it,—would save him—he would—live?”

He nodded, “a great joy has in many instances accomplished this result.” Pauline’s head drooped on her breast for a moment;—a moment in which she went through an agonizing life time of woe. Her lips moved but no sound came from them. “Good-bye—love—hope—and all the joys that make life worth living,” she was murmuring; “oh, Heaven pity me, I cannot see my father *die*,—when I can save him.” She rose slowly from her knees, bent over, and kissed the senator’s pallid cheek, her own being equally as pale.

“Do you hear me? can you understand, father?” she

sobbed piteously—"Your life shall be spared at any cost;—I—will—marry Mr. Weslow here—and—now."

When Senator Rae heard her decision, something very like a glory broke over his face. The doctor pointed to it, both Pauline and Weslow saw it. The girl sank down burying her face on her father's shoulder. Daniel Weslow did not know the supreme sacrifice she had made. Smiling, he was repeating below his breath, lines he had somewhere read:—

"She is mine own;
And I as rich in having such a jewel
As twenty seas; if all their sands were pearl,
The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold."

CHAPTER III

WHOM FIRST WE LOVE, WE SELDOM WED

“The bond that links our souls together
Will it last through stormy weather?
Will it stretch if Fate divide us,
When dark and weary hours have tried us?
O, if it look too poor and slight,
Let us break the links tonight.”

Hugh Boyd stood at the Park entrance, watch in hand. It was fully half an hour past the time Pauline should have been there; he wondered what detained her on this occasion of all others. He had worked himself up to such a nervous pitch, he could endure the suspense no longer, and decided to go to the house. He believed the senator to be in Washington, therefore did not trouble himself as to what excuse he should make.

Hailing a passing taxi, in ten minutes time he was at his destination.

The butler who admitted him did not know Pauline had gone out. He heard Boyd order the chauffeur to wait, and thought as he glanced at the dapper young clerk, that he must have money to burn to indulge in such extravagance.

Boyd made his way quickly to the drawing-room; as he entered, he saw a slight girlish figure in Pauline's favorite chair, and stepped quickly forward. “My darling, my own Pauline!” he cried throwing prudence

to the winds and gathering her swiftly into his arms, “why are you still here while the most precious moments of our lives are rushing by. I have determined we must be married within this hour my love. Get your wraps quickly, I have a taxi at the door, I——”

The girl struggled out of his embrace with a low laugh.

The voice seemed strangely familiar,—but—it was NOT—Pauline’s.

She had been in the shadow of the dark room; she turned deliberately to the window, drawing the heavy draperies aside, exclaiming, as she did so, “Hugh Boyd!”

The light fell full upon her face. He recoiled as though she had struck him a blow with that white hand of hers. “Valleau—Marcelle—Valleau!” he echoed, “What—are—YOU—doing here? I—could almost believe my eyes are deceiving me,—I—am—so astounded!”

“Not more so than I am at encountering—YOU—HERE. I do not have to inquire your purpose—you have just disclosed it. Heiress hunting seems to be your occupation.”

“You have followed me here from France!” he cried, seizing her roughly by the arm, his face fairly livid with rage.

She wrenched herself free from his grasp with a scornful laugh.

“You are wrong;—I had no hope of ever running across you again; this meeting is purely accidental,—but none the less interesting.

“What brought you here—into THIS house!” he repeated angrily, “answer me,—I WILL know;—YOU—Valleau, the cabaret dancer—in the home of—Senator Rae,—and, apparently, on intimate terms here. “YOU, the talk of Paris.”

“You need not repeat all that, I heard you the first time,” she sneered with a laugh not pleasant to hear, but I might as well appease your intense curiosity. A few words sufficed to explain the situation.

“I do not know how you succeeded in gaining an entre into this home, and into the affections of the daughter of the house; I see you are up to your same old trick, endeavoring to arrange a hasty marriage.—This is where I get the best of you, Hugh Boyd,—You skipped from Paris with my savings of years;—now,—you shall meet the penalty.

To her intense surprise, he drew from his breast pocket a roll of bills, counting out twice as much as the sum she complained of being fleeced out of. “Here is your money, and double the amount. I am really not as bad as you think me; I intended to cable that amount to you, to Paris,—today.”

She looked the amazement she felt.

“That is the proof of it, is it not?” he queried, pointing to the bills in her hand. She could not help but assent that it certainly appeared so.

“You and I cannot afford to quarrel, Marcelle,” he said. “I will make it worth your while to hold your tongue concerning—me,—and I promise no word from my lips shall disclose to this household they are entertaining Valleau, the toast of Paris;—’though WHY you

are here, is still a mystery to me; that is of course, your secret, and no affair of mine. The cash I have just given you, squares us with each other, does it not?" she nodded. "We may be helpful to each other in the future, Marcelle," he added eagerly. "I may need you; I don't know how, yet;—the future will determine. There is no question of sentiment between you and me—now." He looked at her inquiringly.

"You are right," she replied. "I laugh at the notion I ever imagined you could be anything to me. I know what you want;—you would have me use my influence to aid you in winning the heiress Pauline Rae!"

He nodded. "I will make it worth your while. I am here to see her now—"

"She is not in;—she went off in her car over an hour ago!" "Good Lord!—I have missed her!" He turned and was just about to rush from the room when he heard a great commotion in the corridor. The next instant Mrs. Holt, the housekeeper, came hurriedly into the room.

"You wish to see Miss Pauline," she said, addressing Boyd, "that will be impossible; I might as well tell you the great, and joyful news:—

Edwards telephoned me a moment ago that she has just been wedded to Mr. Daniel Weslow. The bride and groom, and her father are on their way here; I expect they will arrive any moment."

Boyd did not lose an instant in getting out of the house and into the waiting taxi. "To my rooms!" he cried excitedly; I'll double your money if you get me there inside of ten minutes.

The chauffeur nodded, reaching the street and number within the time. "Wait here for me," he said, springing out of the taxi;—"I want to make the night boat for Boston; I'll be back in a moment." "You have just eighteen minutes sir."

Boyd had not an instant to think over the why or wherefore of the most astounding occurrence. He had played desperately—and lost. His next move was to hustle his belongings into a suit-case—and beat it. He had wealth enough about him to take him as far away as he might care to go. He ran up the steps three at a time, muttering:—"Bah! what do I care for the loss of a fool girl;—the world's full of 'em;—but the money! was there ever such cursed luck."

He fitted his key in the lock hastily, flinging open the door. In his great haste he forgot his usual caution of closing and securing it. He did not see the two blue-coated forms that followed close behind him, slipping unobserved into a curtained alcove.

Boyd rushed across the room to a closet, taking from it a suit case which he opened hurriedly, laying it upon the table. In a trice he threw the contents of his bulging pockets into it,—stacks of stocks, bonds and bundles of bank-notes.

As he rushed to the wardrobe to grab a suit of clothes, a sportive breeze from an open window caught up the loosened pile of bank notes lying on top, scattering them about the room in all directions.

A fierce imprecation, over this delay broke from Boyd's lips as he stooped to gather them up, which changed instantly to one of fright as a heavy hand came

down on his shoulder and he was jerked forcibly to his feet, to look up into the face of a stalwart policeman.

In an instant he had formulated a plan of action,—while the one officer was engaged in gathering up the money, he struggled with the other about the room until he came abreast of the open window, then, quick as a flash, and before his adversary had time to realize his intention, Boyd had divested himself of his coat, sprang through it, shutting it down with a bang.

He knew by the policeman's cry of pain, that it had closed on his fingers of both hands, holding them there with a grip. No one save himself knew how that trick window opened;—they would have to break it sash and all, to set him free;—that would take time.

It was but the work of a moment to make his way down the fire-escape to the street, and the waiting cab.

Hatless, coatless, how could he board the Boston boat in that condition! All the cash he had was in his trousers pocket. He found that it amounted to a couple of hundred dollars or more. On his way to his destination he must pass the little Church Around the Corner; as he expected, Reardon was standing on the pavement, waiting patiently for him.

It took but a moment to stop the taxi, and drag his surprised friend into it. A few words explained the dire situation.

Boyd stepped from the cab wearing Reardon's suit. During the ride he had managed, despite the swaying of the vehicle, to divest himself of the very handsome moustache which had been his pride.

"I say Boyd, your own mother wouldn't know you."

approved Reardon as the former stepped out of the taxi at the wharf. "I'll keep you posted as to further happenings, get at the bottom, as to how Weslow put this over on you, with the heiress."

An imprecation ground out between Boyd's white teeth, was his only answer. Boyd boarded the boat just as she was swinging out.

When it reached its destination, the detectives waiting to search both train and boat, found the man they were looking for, *was not aboard*.

Despite the policeman's maimed hands, as soon as he was released, he lost no time in communicating with Edwards, who hurried to the scene at once. His joy was great to discover all the stocks and bonds were intact, as well as the moneys of the clients; there was, however, something like five thousand dollars missing from Weslow's stack of gold notes. He knew the senator would make up that loss promptly.

Edwards lost no time in advising the senator of what had taken place.

It was a strange home-coming for a bride and groom. Daniel Weslow suggested to Pauline that they go to the Waldorf Astoria, where he was stopping. The blue eyes she raised to him were brimming with tears.

"You go there, Please," she answered. "I am going home with papa; I couldn't think of leaving him."

"If that be your decision, I reckon I better go back home at once, and come for you when you are ready." She made no reply, hiding her head on her father's shoulder. He could feel his daughter's slender form trembling like an aspen leaf against his heart.

Owing to the doctor's powerful stimulants, the senator had regained his speech, in part. "I think I may send Pauline to her old governess in Boston, for two or three weeks," he whispered feebly. "By that time I shall have to take a business trip out west—your way, and will bring her to you, if you approve of it."

"Everything shall be just as Pauline says," declared Weslow, wistfully, stealing an arm about his bride, and attempting to draw her to his side, as the car bowled rapidly along toward the Rae home.

Pauline shrank from his caress, clinging to her father. Weslow attributed it to maiden modesty.

As the automobile containing the bridal party drew up at the house, all the members of the senator's family were lined up in the spacious entrance hall to bid them welcome. There, too, stood Marcelle Vallean looking curiously at the man who had cut out the dashing Hugh Boyd. He entered, half lifting, half carrying the senator, Edwards assisting on the other side,—Pauline following.

One glance at the bridegroom's face, and the French girl drew back with a stifled cry. In him, she saw the hero of her dreams, the man whom she had come to America for the express purpose of finding, winning and wedding.

He had touched her hand,—heard her tremulous voice in welcome, glancing casually at her at the time;—she knew he had not remembered that he had ever met her before. He had wedded a girl who had no love for him;—one in whose heart another was enshrined;—while—

she—would have given life itself, to have stood by his side for one brief hour,—his bride.

From the welcoming group, Daniel turned to Pauline, whispering, as he attempted to draw her into his arms: “Cannot we have a few moments alone together, dear? If I am to return west without you, I’ll aim to catch the next out-going train—”

“You will have barely time to make it sir, as it is,” remarked Edwards consulting his watch. Daniel looked wistfully at Pauline, hoping against hope that she might bid him—stay. She avoided his glance.

Hastily wringing the hands of the senator and Edwards, and nodding to the others, he caught Pauline in his arms, straining her closely to his breast—despite her resistance—which he attributed to on-lookers.

“Pauline, my darling,” he whispered brokenly, “I must go quickly—if at all. I am leaving behind me—in your keeping, my heart, dear.”

He forgot there were others about them, all he realized, was, he was holding his treasure in his arms—for the first time,—and she was all his own, his fair young bride. The very life of him, aye, his soul were in the sacred kisses he showered on her white face, and cold, unresponsive lips, as he whispered huskily, despairingly: “Oh, Pauline, my wife, it seems like tearing the living, beating heart from my bosom to part from you. Only God will know how I will count the hours until I hold you in my arms again.” One last passionate kiss—and he was gone. Her face was wet with his tears. He never knew Pauline fell in a swoon at her father’s feet.

Marcelle Vallean had watched the scene with almost uncontrollable rage. A smoldering fire burned in the dusky eyes the white lids covered. Turning abruptly she fled unnoticed to her room, flinging herself face downward on the couch. The man she coveted above all else in the world, had raised a barrier between them,—but—barriers had been known—to—break.

CHAPTER IV.

ARE MISFIT MARRIAGES EVER REMEDIED

“Is there within thy heart a need
That mine cannot fulfill?
One cord that any other hand
Could better make—or still?

.

“Search not to find what lies too deeply hid,
Nor to know things where knowledge is forbid.”

WHEN father and daughter found themselves alone, Pauline rose from her knees beside his chair, looking him steadily in the eyes.

“You have won out, father,” she said slowly, “I have married the man whom you desired for a son-in-law,—but I tell you here and now—I will never live with Daniel Weslow;—he and I will never be more,—never nearer to each other than we are at this moment. You—nor he—nor all the powers on earth cannot force me to live with him;—understand that fully,—and make it—known to him—as you best know how.”

Senator Rae closed his eyes wearily. “I am a very sick man, my child,” he muttered weakly, “too indisposed to discuss the situation with you—now.—Remember the doctor warned against any undue excitement. Kiss me, my dear, I am going to my room.”

Pauline realized that he must feel weak indeed, to

ring for assistance to arise from his chair. She proffered her aid quickly, but he turned wearily to his valet who answered his summons with alacrity. At the door Pauline held up her lips mechanically for his usual good-night kiss.

Both noticed, for the first time a restraint,—a sudden coldness had stolen between them—marring their loving companionship.

“God bless you, daughter, dear,” murmured the old senator, laying a shaking hand on her fair, bowed young head. “The time will come, Pauline, when you will realize your father—knew—best.”

The girl turned abruptly away, stifling the bitter rejoinder that was on her lips. She felt that she was a martyr—her happiness sacrificed on the altar of—duty. She despised Daniel Weslow for the influence he seemed to wield over her father. Even as the words were spoken—“I PRONOUNCE YOU MAN—AND—WIFE!” she had promised herself,—if her father died, she would divorce the man who stood by her side, without delay,—the sacrifice being useless.

After parting with her father, Pauline groped her way to her room through blinding tears; there, she gave way to violent weeping, sobbing over and over and over again, “Oh, Hughey, my love, what will you do or say, when you learn what I have done?”

Suddenly she thought of Marcelle, whose life had also been wrecked on love’s rock. A little later there was a tap on Marcelle’s door, and, in answer to her “come in,” Pauline entered. She was surprised to see her face showed traces of violent weeping.

“You are in trouble, dear Pauline,” she murmured advancing hurriedly, and throwing her arms about her,—“Can I help you in any way?”

“Yes, yes—you can!” sobbed Pauline, “I need your sympathy, your—help in this, my hour of woe,—as no girl ever needed help—and advice.”

Marcelle led her to a divan, taking a seat beside her, her arms still twined about Pauline.

“Marcelle, you made me your confidante about your unhappy love affair to-day,—now, I am here to tell you about mine; you will pity me, Marcelle,—for I am the most unhappy girl in all the world.”

“You unhappy, dear; you—who have wealth, beauty, and just wedded to the man you love—”

Pauline interrupted her with hysterical weeping. “That is just it, Marcelle, I am married, tied as hard and fast as the marriage knot can bind me,—but I am NOT—wedded to the man I love.”

“No!” exclaimed the French girl wonderingly. “You shall tell me all about it, and I will know how to—comfort you.”

Pauline was very young, and—oh, so inexperienced;—she had never known falsity or deceit existed; that girlish lips could smile endearingly while the heart was cold,—even bitter. Her heart craved sympathy, this Marcelle appeared to offer.

Sitting there, closely folded in the French girl’s arms, Pauline confided to her all of her pitiful story, from beginning to end. When she had finished, she looked up into Marcelle’s face, asking piteously:—“Tell me what am I to do, dear friend—while my heart

is full of love for—the lover from whom a cruel fate has parted me?”

“I am not only sorry for you, dear,—but for your young lover whose heart this affair will surely break;—it will wreck his life.”

“Oh, do not say that!” cried Pauline, breaking out afresh into violent weeping, “my heart will surely break—to think that!”

“We will think, and confer what is best to be done—later on. I say it was abominable in this man to take advantage of a situation and force,—as it were,—the result—your marriage with him. You say there has never been any courtship between you;—you have every reason to despise him for it. You did perfectly right to send him away—at once.”

“I am so glad you approve of what I did; you are the only one in the house who is not against me for doing so; even father.”

During the fortnight which followed, the senator's health improved rapidly; but he saw very little of Pauline; she was always with the French girl, her new found friend. At first he felt like resenting the presence of the stranger, but, as he saw her day after day, and noted how charmed his daughter was with her, he concluded she was a pleasing addition to the household. Marcelle did everything that the rest did not think of doing,—to make him comfortable, thus earning his sincere gratitude.

At the end of the third week, the senator announced to Pauline that she must prepare to accompany him west, without delay; he had business interest which

demanded his presence; he could see her safely to Oklahoma City.

In vain she protested that she would *not* go; he was inexorable.

"It is your duty to go to your husband," he said reprovingly. "Daniel wants you, he needs you, he adores you,—It seems to me you ought to be very—proud of him. I am going to tell you a little secret that we have been keeping from you;—Weslow is running for United States Senator,—mark me, he will win, and my little girl will recognize, as every one else does, that there are few like him. From the hour you wedded him, I have never ceased thanking God for giving me this man for a son-in-law."

"It is his vast wealth that will buy him the senatorial votes," replied Pauline with curling lip.

"If he hadn't a dollar in the world, he would be the choice of the people," defended her father warmly.

In the end, after much battling, Senator Rae conquered. Pauline was fairly forced into accompanying him on the trip west. It was decided Marcelle should remain as part and parcel of the Rae home, much to the disgust of Mrs. Holt and the servants, every one of whom entertained a secret dislike for her—a sentiment which Marcelle Vallean was well aware of.

"This French girl has bewitched the Senator, as well as his daughter," said Mrs. Holt when she heard the decision; ever since she had been installed in the house, there had been no love lost between them.

It had been a great disappointment to Daniel Wes-

low to return to his home in the far west, leaving his bride behind him; but, her will was law to him.

When he reached Oklahoma City, he saw, with dismay, half of the town had gathered at the station, and blamed the telegraph dispatches for the mischief. There was great amazement among his fellow town-folks when he stepped from the train—alone.

The rousing welcome accorded him,—the cheers and shouts of approval, proclaimed his great popularity. Then and there he was obliged to mount a pile of boxes, and explain to the crowd the reason why Mrs. Weslow had not accompanied him. The cheers were renewed with vigor when he announced she would be along, in the course of three or four weeks;—quite as soon as her father was able to accompany her.

Daniel would not accept the use of the automobile which was there for his use. “No boys,” he said, “I want to go to my home, afoot, as I have always done; I want to stop and shake the hand of every old friend I meet.—I want to pat the heads of the little ones I know, and maybe kiss their rosy little faces. I want to stop and see the corn ripening in the fields,—and the herds of fine cattle galloping over the plains. I tell you what, neighbors, it’s mighty fine to be back in God’s country again. Why, I wouldn’t exchange the few acres I own here, among you, for all New York City.—No, neighbors, I’m much obliged to you all, just the same, for the car, but I prefer to walk,—and—alone.”

They gave him his way, but the cheering continued until the tall form was lost to sight in the distance.

With one accord they agreed Daniel Weslow would surely win at the forth-coming election as the United States senator to be sent from Oklahoma to Washington.

Mrs. Bemis, his house-keeper, was glad to see him, but, like the rest was surely disappointed that his bride was not with him; especially as he had telegraphed her he was bringing home—a wife;—To be sure and have one of those fine hot, chicken dinners, which she knew so well how to cook,—all ready. She had had a good cry over the telegram, after she had gotten over her great surprise, and, ever since she wondered what the girl must be like who had won the big, wonderful heart of Mr. Daniel, as she called him. She thought the best woman the world held, none too good for the noble man, whom she revered and loved as the apple of her eye. In early childhood his parents had passed away, leaving the little boy alone in the world. The widow Bemis, who was earning her living by teaching the district school, took him in, and cared for him.

In after years, when she was no longer able to earn her bread in this way, he repaid her years of kindness by caring for her when she needed care the most. She had been his counsellor all those years, and now,—since fortune had been showering such amazing wealth upon him, she was still his counsellor, and adviser.

The only secret he had ever kept from her, was, the fact of his having met and loved Pauline Rae. No wonder his telegram had astounded her.

They sat down to the hot, chicken dinner together, and over the meal—which she noticed he did not par-

take of with the same old relish, he gave her a faithful resume of all that had transpired.

"I am anxious to see what she is like," sighed Mrs. Bemis wistfully.

Daniel's hand traveled to his breast pocket—from which he took a bit of paste-board wrapped in a silk handkerchief, handing it to her.

An exclamation of surprise broke from her lips when she took off the wrapping and her eyes rested on it.

She beheld a snap-shot of a young girl, fastening her dainty pump slipper, her foot resting upon the running-board of an automobile.

Daniel colored like a peony, at the same time laughing heartily at Mrs. Bemis's consternation.

"You see it was this way," he confessed:—"I was powerful anxious to get a picture of Pauline; I aimed I'd get one somehow. I saw one of those fellows with a little black box in his hand—"

"A kodak, Mister Daniel," she interrupted.

"Yes, one of those things,—taking pictures of those tall sky-scraper across the way;—I paid him something pretty to take a snap-shot of the senator's daughter when she should come down from her father's office and get into her car which stood there. The performance was staged all right,—but,—just as he was pressing the button, she stooped down to tie her shoe;—so there you are. Look at that trim ankle as tiny as your wrist. I've got the lovely original now, so I don't need to try again for a picture of Pauline, though her face is completely covered by her floppy

hat in this. Lord! how Pauline will laugh when I show her this!—it's a good one on me."

"You got just what you deserved for your impudence, Mister Daniel," she observed dryly, though much amused.

She realized how completely his heart was wrapped up in the girl as she listened to his description of her. She was aghast when he confided to her that he had made over to her his entire fortune, every penny of it, save a house for herself, and an income sufficient to keep her in comfort as long as she should live. You see I did not forget my debt to you, Mrs. Bemis, nor my duty which was to set aside enough to make you independent of any one, hereafter.

In her joy Mrs. Bemis threw her arms about him, kissing him as she wept.

"You have been like an own son to me, Mr. Daniel," she sobbed. "May God bless you, and make your future as smooth for you, as you have made mine."

The good soul was greatly troubled that he had made over his fine fortune to this girl,—but she dared not voice her thoughts. "I pray heaven that it may be all right," was her silent prayer.

During the days that followed, Daniel did not lose a day that he did not write to his darling Pauline,—but, to his dismay, and that of Mrs. Bemis not so much as a line came to him to reply.

"She is busy looking after her father, God bless her," he explained, "she will be sure to write me tomorrow." But, day after day dragged their slow lengths by, still there was no word from Pauline.

"She may be ill," he declared at length, in alarm. "I can stand this suspense no longer; if I do not hear from her by the end of the week, I shall go to New York."

At this state of affairs, Mrs. Bemis, who had found out from Daniel the address of Senator Rae, took it upon herself to end his suspense by sending a long telegram, not to Pauline, but her father. This brought results.

Two days later Daniel was overjoyed to receive a despatch from the senator, stating, he and Pauline would arrive in Oklahoma City, a week from that day. Daniel was now as joyous as he had been miserable.

"I will go down three stations below, and meet and board the train," he announced. "I must prepare them to expect a crowd, if, by chance anyone got wind they were to arrive."

Like a blushing school-boy, he consulted, with much bashfulness, with Mrs. Bemis, as to the best place to pass their honeymoon, suggesting the Hotel Davenport, in Spokane. The good lady put in a vigorous veto to that arrangement. "It's a splendid place," she admitted, but, a man from Oklahoma ought to spend his honeymoon in his own state,—I propose you stay right here in your own home.—Isn't it fine enough for any lady in the land, I should like to know?"

He had his doubts as to whether such an arrangement would suit Pauline,—it would have to be as she wished; the result was they agreed they would have to let it rest at that, awaiting her coming, and her pleasure.

“God help a man who is as much wrapped up in a woman’s whim as poor Mr. Daniel is,” she thought. In his answer to her dispatch, Senator Rae had replied Pauline would stop at Oklahoma City, but, for business reasons, he would be obliged to continue his journey further.

She dared not tell Daniel that she knew this, concerning their plans;—not even when he bade her make ready another room for Pauline’s father.

She attended to every detail of decorating the bridal-chamber, as she called it; even Daniel caught his breath when he was at last allowed to peep into it, with Mrs. Bemis’s permission.

“I’m sure Pauline will be charmed with it,—aren’t you?” he queried very eargerly, and wistfully.

“She’d be a mighty-hard-to-suit-girl—if she wouldn’t be,” she responded, looking with pride around the beautiful room.

Time cannot linger with the present;—it must pass either slowly, or quickly in accordance with the joy in some hearts, or the sorrow in others.

The eagerly awaited day rolled around at last. Daniel had been up with the dawn; indeed Mrs. Bemis knew he had not slept a wink, all the long night through;—she had heard him tip-toeing to and fro, opening and shutting windows softly. She had not been able to get much sleep herself, on account of him.

As she tossed to and fro on her pillow, she thought, “God help a man as much in love as Mr. Daniel is; I never imagined he could be so foolish.”

Getting through breakfast was a matter of pretense with him; he could not eat; but Mrs. Bemis made no comment. She certainly pitied him.

When it came time for him to dress to go to meet the train, he called her into his room. He was sitting on his bed with neck-ties covering it, and strewn all over the floor. He looked up at her in helpless bewilderment. "I just wanted to ask you, which of all these, do you think is the most—becoming, Mrs. Bemis."

She looked at his eager, earnest face, crushing back the laugh that was on her lips, as her glance took in the flaming tie he was holding at arms length,—evidently hoping she might approve of it. She shook her head;—he laid it down with a sigh. Purple, flame, orange, and green she likewise vetoed.

"Which one is it to be, then?" he queried in despair, "they've muddled me."

She pointed to a dark, midnight blue. "That's the one you wore to New York;—it looks more dignified than the others, Mr. Daniel."

"Dignified!" he echoed, "I look too dignified, by long odds now. You do not seem to realize, Mrs. Bemis, that I must, well,—er—spruce up, you know—Pauline is—*Young*;—just turned seventeen."

"Try the most likely ones on, that is the only way we can tell," she said.

One after the other were no sooner donned, than discarded.

"I'll shut my eyes, and wear the first one I pick

up," he declared, at last. "I have no time to fool with you any longer, Mrs. Bemis; I see you are at a loss concerning the eternal fitness of things."

She knew *he* was the one who was at a loss concerning the fitness of what was most appropriate for the occasion, but she made no response.

He shut his eyes, and made a grab. Mrs. Bemis fairly gasped when she beheld what he had in his hand:—a yellow and purple cotton with a green vine running through it, on which at intervals were perched, tawny bees.

"That's *your* grab, Mr. Daniel," she cried quite as soon as she could control her voice to speak, "now let's try *mine*?" But he was already donning it,—and she knew further remonstrance was useless. He was making a most grievous mistake, but she was powerless to prevent it. She would not scold or attempt to cross him on this occasion of all others.

In that moment, the thought passed idly through her mind where he had gotten that grotesque tie. She had seen an old Indian woman weaving it, and purchased it for him;—he had never before worn it. She wished most ardently that she had thrown it away, or disposed of it years ago.

At the mirror he hesitated. "You could do me a great favor, if you would, Mrs. Bemis," he observed earnestly.

"You know I would do anything in the world for you, Mr. Daniel," she replied.

He pointed to his temples. "There are a few gray

hairs there," he said. "Would you mind clipping them out, for me?"

"I could do it, but I assure you, where you clip out a white hair, a full dozen comes to each funeral," she declared.

"I won't mind, if they come to the funeral dressed in black," he responded.

When he was all ready to go, he looked fine in her eyes, fine, all save the obnoxious neck-tie. "If she loves him,—and certainly she must, or she would not have married him,—she will pay no heed to the tie," she concluded.

From the window Mrs. Bemis saw him leap into the saddle. He waved Good-bye to her, and was off like the wind to meet the train a few stations away.

Ere he had ridden half a mile, the tie, rotted with age, fell apart owing to the stiff wind he was facing,—one part of it, which had been fastened to the bosom of his shirt remaining,—the balance of it fluttering to the roadside. So busy was he with his thoughts, he did not notice the contretemps until he was almost at his journey's end.

Then, snatching the two frayed ends, he thrust them into his breast pocket. He was rather relieved than otherwise, that he was not wearing that tie,—better none than that one. He remembered he had seen several of the boys guiltless of a tie. He hoped Pauline would not notice its omission.

In the distance he heard the shriek of the incoming train. It almost seemed to him that his heart leaped out of his bosom and flew to meet it. Riding swiftly

onward, thinking of Pauline, lines he had once read occurred to him—

“It cannot be that I fulfill,
Completely all her girlish dreams
For far beyond I feel that still
Some other ideal surely gleams.”

CHAPTER V

KINDLING USELESS HOPES

“God grant that you may never know
A withered rose, a fallen bird,
A garden where no songs are heard,
Nor even that I miss you so,
Good night, dear heart!”

* * * * *

“There is a word of grief the sounding token;
There is a word bejeweled with bright tears,
A little word that breaks the chain of years;
But utterance must ever bring emotion,
'Tis known in every land, on every ocean,
'Tis called ‘Good-bye’.”

ALTHOUGH Marcelle had done her utmost to prevail upon Pauline not to go west, her father's insistence had overruled in the end.

During the entire journey, the senator noticed how abstracted, even gloomy Pauline had become; all the glad girlishness of other days seemed to have dropped from her; this worried him greatly. She had become cold, unresponsive, drooping—like a flower blighted in the bud. How was he to account to Weslow for this great change in her.

The senator noted, too, that she was not wearing the splendid ring, a diamond of unusual purity, and beauty which Weslow had sent her.

“Are you afraid some western bandit might relieve you of it, dear?” he queried, pointing to the hand which it should have adorned.

He learned it was attached to a ribbon she wore about her neck.

“It would be no loss to me if the bandits were to take it, as I shall—never wear it,” she declared decisively. “It is my intention to return it to Mr. Weslow as soon as we meet.”

“Heaven forbid that a daughter of mine should so insult and humiliate a good, noble man!” returned the senator warmly. Pauline shrugged her shoulders, vouchsafing no reply.

“She is still thinking of and worrying over that damned rascal—Boyd!” he concluded; after a pause, he said sharply, “If you do not care for the ring, give it to me.” He finished the thought unspoken—anything rather than return it to Weslow.

To his great astonishment, she slipped it from the cord and handed it over to him at once, without comment.

He found himself in a dilemma upon which he had not counted. He was wearing a like gem of singular beauty, and most unique setting; therefore, he had no use for another. The stick-pin which he wore was of the same curious design.

He had no other recourse than to slip it into his vest pocket. After a moment's pause, he said: “You had better take care of it for the present, for me, I would be sure to lose it, carrying it so carelessly about me. He found Pauline firm in her refusal to accept it.

"More pickings for the bandits," he remarked, resignedly settling back in his seat, and picking up a newspaper to lose his unpleasant thoughts in. Pauline made no response, she was staring hard at the wild, barren rugged scenery of the country through which they were passing. "We have been in Oklahoma some time; we ought to reach Oklahoma City in an hour, I should judge,—it is five stations from here," he remarked.

As he picked up his paper again, to finish the article he had been reading, his ear caught the sound of a commotion at the other end of the observation car. Both he and Pauline saw, and realized at the same time what had happened. A tall form had flung open the rear door of the observation car, and standing on the threshold, was pointing the weapons he held in both hands, at the terror-stricken occupants.

He wore the costume of the typical western cow-boy, his begrimed sombrero pulled well down over his eyes, and a piece of dark cloth masking the lower part of his face.

"Easy now!" he exclaimed in a deep, sonorous voice, "You people won't get hurt unless you dis-o-bey orders. I want what valuables every one of yo has got about yo, an' I aim to get em in a hurry. Speed up here, fall into line, and drop yor glist'ners an' bucks in this here bag. I reckon you know what'll happen if yo attempt t' squeal or hold anythin' back—quick now, hustle, I say!"

One by one the terrified passengers, complied; his practiced eye seemed to divine at a glance where the valuables of each one was concealed.

One man attempted to put up a protest; a bullet from the bandit's gun grazed his temple. This terrible warning sufficed for the rest.

He speeded the trembling line of men and women past him in record time. The senator was obliged to follow the example of the rest. His roll of bills he did not care so much for,—but his pin and ring he prized most highly; they had been family heirlooms for years, handed down. He dared make no resistance, in the face of the weapons covering him. His heirlooms, watch and chain,—even Pauline's ring went into the robber's bag without ado.

“I have nothing whatever of any value about me,” said Pauline, pale but calm, facing the man fearlessly in the eye. To her surprise, she read—admiration in the eyes looking down into her own. In her momentary scrutiny of him, she noted a tie, of most ugly pattern, whose end dangled from his vest pocket;—a yellow, green and purple cotton thing, with a red vine, and tawny bees scattered over it.

“Yor th' puttiest piece o' work I ever saw miss,” he grinned. “I reckon yo can keep yor trinkets, move on quick afore I re—pent o' my generosity.

At that instant the gleam of her wedding ring caught her eye;—taking it from her finger she tossed it with the rest of the loot—into the yawning pouch. To her amazement, and that of the terrified onlookers—he tossed it back to her with a harsh laugh.

“I'm not aimin t' take a woman's wedding ring,” he remarked jocularly,—“that's of value t' th' owner only, as it never contains a sparkler.”

“You may as well keep it;—I was just considering tossing it from the window,” she declared, cresting her head proudly, as she threw it in the man’s face,—much to his apparent astonishment.

“Nope!” he responded, “I insist upon yer takin’ it right back, an’ putting it on your finger—where it belongs.”

She shook her head defiantly. To the surprise of the terrified onlooker the bandit appeared to grow furious at her obstinacy.

“Put it on, I say!” he roared, as he pointed his weapon menacingly at her father in a manner not to be misunderstood.

Pale, but still defiant, Pauline obeyed his command.

“I know a thing or two about foolish, high-strung young wives,” he commented grimly. There are those who need a cave-man’s strong arm to bring ’em to submission, an’ I make no doubt yer one of ’em.”

Pauline’s eyes flashed. “I resent being lectured—insulted by a—robber—a common—thief!” she exclaimed.

“For God’s sake do not anger the desperado!—no knowing what he might do,” her father whispered hoarsely in her ear.

Low as had been the whispered comment, the keen ears of the bandit heard it. He laughed an ugly laugh.

“Right you are, old fellow!” he retorted grimly, “for instance, I might take a notion to kidnap your haughty daughter, and crush all that foolish pride out of her,—if I had to crush th’ heart o’ her t’ do it.”

The senator reeled back;—he would have fallen to the

floor had not Pauline sprung to his side quickly, winding her arms about him, supporting him,—then, turning to the bandit, she appealed in a shaking, humbled voice and attitude: “You have secured all there is of value from those assembled on this train—wont you please—go?”

“Would it be a great relief to you to be relieved of my presence?” he queried quizzically, as he adjusted his mask.

“Yes, a very great relief!” assented Pauline. “Do, please leave us.”

“Anything to oblige a lady,—’specially one as young an’ pretty as yourself, miss,” he retorted, and again that strange sarcastic laugh broke from his lips. No one spoke, but there was a fear in every heart that it was his intention, from the way he was gazing at the senator’s daughter,—to force her from the train. All were praying God to save her.

An instant later he was backing out of the car. Rushing to the window, the passengers saw him spring upon the back of a horse that had been following the train, swerve suddenly to the right, and was lost to sight amidst a clump of trees.

The train had gone some three or four miles ere the conductor, who had been summoned by the violent pulling of the bell-rope, was able to reach the observation coach, and learn what had occurred.

At that moment the train was slowing up at a little station three miles east of Oklahoma City. The conductor announced they would stop twenty minutes here for luncheon.

Pauline and her father had barely stepped out on the platform ere he pointed to a figure riding swiftly toward them.

“It is Daniel Weslow,” he exclaimed in a pleased voice as he adjusted his spectacles. “Ah, what a relief it is to me to deliver you into his safe-keeping. My! what a long, dusty ride he has had; his horse is as wet as though he had forded a creek, and it is covered with dust and foam as well.”

At that moment Daniel espied them and waved his hat vigorously.

In less time than it takes to tell it he had leaped from the saddle, and was hurrying toward them with long, swinging strides, his face all aglow with a beaming smile of joy.

CHAPTER VI

WEDDED LIFE'S BEGINNING

“A lamp alight, a rose abloom, and you
Make home for me where ere
God put us two.”

* * * *

“I believe we were made to be gay,
And all of youth not given to love
Is vainly squandered away,
And strewn through life's labors
Like gold in the desert sands
Are love's sweet kisses, and sighs, and vows,
And the clasp of clinging hands.”

IN Daniel Weslow's great joy at beholding the girl he loved better than all the world, and clasping her hands, he did not attribute her restraint to any other cause save maiden bashfulness. The senator's warm greeting, took the frost out of Pauline's coolness.

“Don't eat here,” he advised, “there's a fine dinner awaiting you at my place,—or—rather, at Pauline's,” he added, correcting himself with a hearty laugh. “It's only three stations ahead; we'll be there in no time.”

He was sorry to hear the senator was obliged to go on, but glad in another way:—he would have Pauline all to himself. Senator Rae promised to stop on his way back home.

As they entered the train again, they found all of the passengers discussing the daring train robbery which had just taken place.

Daniel listened to the details with the keenest interest, making few comments other than to express his regret at the losses Pauline and her father had suffered.

“That sort of thing happens every once in a while hereabouts,” he said. “Same fellow I reckon,—makes get-aways that would knock th’ spots off a Claudy Duval—or Robin Hood.”

“You have been reading dime novels, Weslow,” laughed the senator, shaking a warning finger at him. At that moment the train began moving on.

“What about your horse?” queried the senator. “Did you forget him?”

Weslow laughed. “Not much; she’s not tied; she’ll just trot along following the train. I tell you what, senator, nothing could buy that mare of me; she’s th’ speediest animal I ever put a leg over, or in th’ whole west; nothing hereabouts can catch her when I give her th’ word to *run for it*.”

The senator felt much trepidation as the train steamed into Oklahoma City.—Would Pauline consent to be left with Weslow, or, would she cling to him—refusing to be parted from him. He could only hope, and await results. In a tone of voice distinctly audible to Pauline’s ears, and for whom it was really intended, the senator related to Weslow that he expected to be met further on by a crew of rough miners, riotously inclined. They were to travel by mule far into the bowels of the earth, that he might examine personally, and rectify conditions they complained of.

Pauline had heard with dismay, every word. She

realized her father would not permit her to accompany him further than Oklahoma City, and her heart sunk within her.

She had little time to cogitate over the matter, for, at the other end of the car the conductor's sonorous voice was announcing her destination.

Daniel sprung to his feet, holding out his hand to Pauline. "Here we are, dear," he said, his eyes glowing, his voice ringing with the happiness which possessed him—"welcome—HOME!"

Senator Rae arose hurriedly, bent over Pauline and kissed her.

"Aurevoir, daughter," he said, "I'll see you again very soon; Daniel has promised me he will take the best of care of you."

Pauline, looking fearfully up, read in her father's face all that he meant it should convey to her. She tried to speak, but words failed her.

The train bells clanged; Weslow caught her in his strong, but gentle clasp, whisking her hurriedly from the train to the platform. There he stood, supporting Pauline with his right arm,—and with his left waving to the senator 'till the train rounded an adjacent curve and was lost to sight.

"Here is your new car, dear," he said, pointing to a handsome touring automobile which had just drawn up to the station platform. "It's a Cadillac,—the finest one—and best make I knew of. You're going to have a chauffeur,—an' everything else in God's world that I can think of—that can add to your pleasure. All you'll have to say, is:—'Dan'l, I want this,

or, I want that,' an' you shall have it if it is in mortal—power for me to get it.”

He had arranged it so carefully that no one outside of his own household knew of their home-coming. Mrs. Bemis was at the porch to bid them welcome. She could not help but stare at the fair vision of lovely girl-hood that Daniel helped out of the car, and brought forward to meet her. At her first glance at Pauline, she did not wonder that poor Daniel had lost not only his heart, but his head. Her one hope was that the pretty young bride would appreciate his affection for her.

She took Pauline in her arms, pillowing her head on her motherly bosom, in much the same fashion that Mrs. Holt, in her far off home in the east was wont to do,—telling her in her hearty way, how glad she was to see her, adding that every servant about the place was just dying to get a peep at her—adding, that they would be sure to love her on sight, as she did.

“You’d better brush up a little, Mr. Daniel,” she said briskly, “I’ll show Mrs. Weslow to her room, and help her take off her wraps.—By that time dinner’ll be on the table.”

He needed no second bidding, but as he passed Mrs. Bemis, she whispered soto voice in his ear:—“The navy-blue necktie, Mr. Daniel.”

“It is a very nice room, Mrs. Bemis,” she said, “but isn’t it large?” “Where do *you* sleep?” she asked in the next breath.

The elder woman opened a door across the hall.

“Here,” she replied, pleased that the young bride took such interest in her.

Pauline looked around at the furnishings,—the bright carpet with the big red roses scattered over it,—the comfy rocking chairs, and the resting lounge, the white curtained windows with cheery side draperies of chintz,—the picture of Washington crossing the Delaware—over the mantel,—the bed with its spotless counterpane, and stiffly starched pillow shams,—and the sewing-machine in the alcove.

“How cozy your room is,” she murmured, in the next breath exclaiming: “Couldn’t I sleep here, with you?—share your room with you—I would be so quiet, so careful not to disturb you.—Do, please say yes, Mrs. Bemis,—and call me—Pauline, won’t you?”

The good woman looked down into the beautiful, pleading girlish face aghast; she was wondering if she had actually heard aright,—for a moment she was at a loss for words in which to make answer; then she took the two little fluttering hands in her own, she had decided she must set the girl right,—use plain speech which she could not fail to comprehend the full meaning of. She began diplomatically:—

“When you think it over, I am sure you will agree with me that it would be quite amiss for me to call you anything save your new name;—Mrs. Weslow. I am only Mr. Daniel’s housekeeper, I could not take it upon myself to express in terms of undue familiarity, one word that would be—ill advised, let us say. The room you and your husband are to occupy, you will find the most pleasantly situated of any in the house. We were

all so sure you would be delighted with it. Come, let me show you the fine big closets where we will arrange your things when your trunks arrive. Just now, wont you smooth your curls, and come down to luncheon? I hear Mr. Daniel pacing up and down the dining room. Bless him, he has a fine appetite, and is as hungry as a bear,—you must be hungry too.”

“Must I go down?” she inquired piteously, dreading the thought of seeing Daniel Weslow there.

“Certainly,” was the response, and Mrs. Bemis smiled to note how much of a child she appeared,—a child, attempting to be—dignified.

“If you like, Mrs. Weslow, I will come back for you in a few minutes to show you the way down,” she observed, as Pauline still hung back. Taking silence for assent, she quitted the room.

Daniel was indeed pacing most restlessly up and down as she reached the handsome new dining room. He looked his disappointment that she had not brought Pauline with her.

“She will be ready to come down shortly,” she announced.

He pointed to the table: “It is only set for two,” he said; “where do you sit?” The old housekeeper laid her hand on his arm.

“Everything is to be different now, Mr. Daniel,” she murmured, bravely keeping the tears back. “During all these years you and I have eaten together—always. But now,—your house-keeper cannot——”

“Bring your chair right in, and sit where you always did,” he commanded. “You have mothered me too

long, too many years to feel that way; why, you are dearer than anyone else in the whole world to me—excepting—my wife.”

“You must commence your new life in the proper way,” she maintained. Mrs. Weslow knows—what is proper in these matters.

“Did you sound her—about—er—th’ honeymoon?—where does she want to go?” he asked anxiously.

Mrs. Bemis shook her head. “That is a matter for you,—and you only—to discuss with your bride, Mr. Daniel. Talk it over at the dinner.”

His eyes roamed anxiously over the table. “Did you forget to put on all of those silver things I got from San Francisco?” he inquired. “There’s a whole case of knives and spoons and mugs, and I don’t know what all. Set on everything I bought, I want it to look fine. She’s used to fine things.”

Mrs. Bemis ran to the serving table, taking out from the drawer a book which she opened, holding it up before his eyes. “This tells the proper way of setting a table, what to put on, and what not to put on it; I wanted to be sure—and make no mistakes,” she explained.

“Well, well! what a trump you are, Mrs. Bemis!” exclaimed Daniel delightedly, giving her a resounding slap on the shoulder to emphasize his approval. He heard the tooting of the automobile horn outside.

“That’s th’ fellow who’s to work th’ car for her,” he explained. “He wants to know if she—if we are going on,—or what he’s to do next.”

“I will speak to him as soon as I learn Mrs. Weslow’s

wishes. That other moving van you see out there is loaded with trunks—she's got four of 'em,—big ones."

"I will fetch her right down, Mr. Daniel. You are to stand behind her chair—draw it out,—

He cut her short with a vehement gesture. "I'm too old to study up all those new trick things now. I'll be sitting in my own place when she comes in, and I'll say: 'Sit right down Pauline; if you don't see what you want, ask for it.'"

She realized it was little use to give him instructions, he would forget everything when his bride appeared.

Mrs. Bemis hastened to the floor above, and tapped lightly on the closed door. There was no response from within. Again, and yet again she tapped, each time louder than before with like result. Then she made bold to enter.

A fresh breeze was blowing from a window which had been closed when she left the apartment; now it was wide open. Mrs. Bemis called her name nervously, anxiously,—she—**WAS NOT IN THE ROOM**; she ran hurriedly to the window, making the alarming discovery that the new automobile in which she had so lately arrived—was—also—**GONE**.

A sudden dizziness came over her, she sank down into the nearest chair, trying to think. Ah, God in heaven!—how was she to break the cruel intelligence to the noble man waiting so patiently below. In what words should she tell Mr. Daniel, whom she loved so well,—

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN WHO HAS NEVER KNOWN LOVE, HAS NEED OF SYMPATHY

“SOME hold that love is a foolish thing,
A thing of little worth;
But whether large, or great, or small,
'Tis love that rules the earth.”

As Mrs. Bemis stood in the beautiful pink and gold boudoir, which was to have been the bridal chamber, trying to summon courage to face Daniel Weslow, and try to tell him what happened,—a great shout from the grounds startled her.

She made her way to the window,—the sight that met her gaze was engraven on her memory to the day she died:—

Some few minutes previous to this, Mrs. Cully, the cook, and her little lame boy, Billy had been sitting on the back-porch admiring the fine new automobile. Suddenly the lad exclaimed excitedly:—

“See, mother, both of the men who run those things have gone into the garage;—couldn't I go over close to the new fine one—and just look in?—”

“No, No!” returned Mrs. Cully, “Mr. Daniel wouldn't like it, Billy.” “Just to go near and look at it wouldn't do it any harm, mum!” pleaded the child wistfully, “I want to, so much.” His mother shook her head.

Billy laid his face against one of his crutches, and she saw big tear-drops roll slowly down his cheeks. Then slowly he raised his poor little pinched, white face to her's.

"I haven't had any pleasures in my life, like other little boys; and oh, I wanted so much to go close to it to look it; is that so very wrong, mum?"

The piteous look on the little face, the sob in his voice, the blue eyes drowned in big tears—went straight to her heart, hurting it like the thrust of a knife.

Poor little Billy! How hard it was to refuse him this, the only request he had ever been known to plead for. All day long he had been wont to sit on the porch in his little chair, watching the flowers, and the sun, and the far off mountain tops. He could not run about like other lads, because of his distorted little limbs. But, since Daniel Weslow had brought him a pair of crutches from the big, far off city, he had managed to get around the grounds;—but it was accomplished slowly, and with much difficulty.

No, God pity the lad, he had had no pleasures, only pain and sorrow! His mother could not find it in her heart to hold out against his eager pleading; she caught him in her arms and wiped the tears away from his little face, murmuring:—"I am going to humor you, this time; you can go and look at it, but mind, do not touch it; the man who runs it would scold if the print of your little hand was on it."

"He turned a radiant face to her. "Thank you mum," he whispered, throwing his arms about her neck, and laying his cheek close to hers; the fervent kisses

he lavished upon her, told her how deeply he had set his heart upon the request which she had just granted. Picking up his crutches, he hobbled off turning a joyous face back at her, at every few steps. Ah!— how little it took to make this little child of misfortune—happy.

He drew near the wonderful automobile with childish wonder; both doors stood open; he was so glad of this, for he could see inside of it: He wondered what riding in it must be like; he had seen children looking out from the windows of cars that had passed the place, and they always smiled as though they were riding right up to heaven. He saw the big wheel inside, burnished like gold. How he wished Mum had said that he might touch it; *just touch it* ever so lightly. He drew closer, peering in.

Whether he leaned in so far that he lost his balance, or, in turning, his crutch touched something below the wheel, he could not tell, all that he realized was, the car suddenly leaped forward, throwing him heavily to the ground, his two crutches flying in opposite directions. Round and round dashed the car in a circle around him, gathering speed with each instant, its doors crashing to and fro.

The boy, lying in a heap where he had been flung, looked up through the clouds into God's face, clutching his little hands together as he did every night at his mother's knee,—then he knew no more.

It had all happened within a moment of time; his mother had seen from the porch; with an awful cry she sprang to her feet, then fell fainting beside his vacant little chair.

Her cry had reached Pauline, who stepped to the window just in time to witness what had taken place; in a crisis, there was not an instant to lose to call aid; she never afterward remembered how she crossed the stretch of ground reaching the flying car. But one decision crossed her brain,—the only way to stop the car was to leap on the running board as it flashed past,—and reach for the wheel.

She did not realize that she was taking her own life in her hands; all she knew, was, the circles the car was making grew narrower with each revolution it made;—another moment and it would pass over the mis-shapen little form crushing the life out of it. This realization nerved Pauline for the leap; twice it passed her;—the third time the girl sprung forward landing on the running-board, another instant and she had grasped the wheel;—it shot forward, missing the boy by scarcely an inch,—on and on, crashing headlong into a stone fence at the further end of the grounds. It had all happened in almost a moment of time; a moment that seemed the length of eternity.

Daniel Weslow, Mrs. Bemis, and the entire household, with the exception of little Billy's mother reached the grounds just as Pauline made the death-daring leap for the car.

Daniel Weslow, with a face as pale as death dashed forward to the wrecked car; he expected to find his darling injured . . . Perhaps . . .

He shouted aloud in his joy when she turned a white face to him, saying, "I saved the child, didn't I?"

He nodded assent. "You, too, have been saved by a

miracle, dear," he sobbed, tears running down his cheek as he helped her to alight. Suddenly she slipped back into his arms. "I—I— think I have sprained my ankle in the leap," she whispered; and the next moment consciousness had left her.

A physician was quickly summoned. "Only a slight sprain, but quite severe enough to keep her in bed and off her feet for a fortnight," he declared, marveling that she had not met with instant death.

Little Billy had recovered from his fright, and his mother from the deep swoon into which she had fallen.

"Let me kiss the hem of her dress," she pleaded, throwing herself on her knees beside Pauline's couch. "My little Billy was not much to look at, but he is all the world to me. My little baby boy; if he had been crushed to death I would have died too; I could not have lived if my brave little laddie had been taken from me."

Pauline laid her white hand on Mrs. Cully's bowed head; she seized it and covered it with fervent kisses.

From that hour there was not one about the place who would not have laid down life itself,—for Mr. Daniel's young wife, they loved her so sincerely.

Of course, there was no honeymooning to be thought of at present. Mr. Daniel occupied his usual quarters, Mrs. Bemis being with Pauline.

At her earnest request, the incident was not known to anyone outside of the members of the household, and the doctor. Daniel was devotion itself. His love grew stronger day by day; the only bitter drop in his cup of peace, was the fact that Pauline resolutely turned

away from his kisses and caresses; even the clasp of his strong, warm hands seemed to annoy her.

He did not understand the ways of women, attributing her moods to bashfulness. He looked eagerly forward to the time Pauline should fully recover, and they should begin their honeymoon.

Senator Rae had stopped over on his way east, but not even to him did Pauline reveal the actual cause of her sprained ankle.

It was Daniel's great joy to carry her in his strong willing arms down to the dining room and back—and to wait upon her like a slave.

On the evening of the third day after Pauline's accident, Daniel came hurriedly into her room, asking:—“Would you mind if I do not come in and sit with you, tonight?”

She did not tell him that it would be a relief to her.

“The fact is, I am expecting a man to call,” he explained. “We have not been the best of friends, but tonight we shall bury the hatchet for all time. A bright man was Reardon; he fell into evil ways and was disbarred from practice for a couple of years; he has just turned up, after digging up cash from—God knows where,—made restitution of certain moneys, and wants to begin anew. I'm not th' man t' turn against a fellow who is trying to do the square thing. He asked to call, I consented; he heard of my marriage and begged permission to be introduced to you soon. It's going to be just as you say, my Pauline,—but really, Reardon is an exceptionally bright fellow; he intends to be my right hand man in my fight for senatorial honors.”

“I suppose I may as well see him,” assented Pauline, thinking that it would be a break at least, in the dead monotony which she would not endure much longer.

Daniel carried her down to the drawing-room, depositing her among the satin cushions, thinking he never saw her looking quite so lovely.

He hoped with all his heart that Reardon would not notice how very lovely his bride was. It never occurred to him that the polished Reardon would make any impression upon his young bride.

Pauline had expected to meet a man much after the pattern of Daniel Weslow, and the other westerners she had seen; her astonishment was great to behold in Mr. Reardon, who was bowing low before her, an unusually handsome man of winning personality—quite the type of society man she had known in the east. In that first moment of meeting, she had read admiration in the dark eyes that met her own, and the hand that clasped hers, trembled slightly, holding it longer than was actually necessary.

Somehow, he reminded her forcibly of—Hugh Boyd. He had the same manner of smiling; used the same gestures and expressions—and she had been trying so valiantly to forget Hughey,—and put him out of her thoughts.

Pauline would have been agitated indeed if she could but have read Reardon’s thoughts in the first moment he beheld her.

He had taken the trip west for the express purpose of carrying a message from his pal Hugh Boyd, to Pauline; Reardon was treacherous by nature,—and, at

the first glance at the girl whom Boyd had lost, he determined that he would do nothing to aid him to get into communication with her. In Pauline, he saw the one girl whom he—could have loved. Inwardly, he raged at the thought that Daniel Weslow had married her. He knew—what she never imagined any one was aware of—the fact that there was no love in her heart for Daniel Weslow.

The next few weeks were busy ones for Daniel; election day was now close at hand. During that time Reardon passed much time at the Weslow home, and was thrown much in the presence of Pauline.

Daniel noted with no little anxiety, their growing friendliness; indeed, Reardon could bring a smile, or a laugh to her lips,—which he—her husband—could never do. Had he done right in bringing a younger—and handsomer man into his home? He put the thought, and fear from him as unworthy to Pauline, plunging the more deeply into his duties. He had no great desire to be a Senator;—he was doing all this for Pauline's sake. His silent prayer was—that he might be everything she admired; attain any height which might make her glad she had married him.

He was devotion itself to her, but,—though love blinds most men,—he could not help but notice how she shrank from his caresses, and how differently she greeted Reardon. Instead of being drawn nearer together with the passing days, he felt they were somehow,—drifting slowly, but steadily apart. He felt that he could not endure this state of affairs much longer.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW LONG CAN MARRIAGE WITHOUT LOVE—ENDURE

“And this is all! The end has come at last
The bitter end of all my happy dream
That cast a halo round my trusting heart
Like golden sunshine on a summer day.
But sunken rocks lie hid in every stream,
And ships are wrecked when just in sight of land;
So I today wake from my peaceful dream
To find my hopes were builded on the sand.”

THE day of the election dawned bright and clear. For the few weeks preceding it, Daniel had been home very little, owing to the campaign speeches he had been making—the length and breadth of his state.

On this day he had returned very tired, but happy. His prospects looked bright;—that meant so much to him, for Pauline’s dear sake.

His town folks greeted him enthusiastically as he stepped from the train. The servants of his household were lined up at the entrance gate to meet and greet him. He saw happy tears in every eye. —but—where was Pauline, his wife, whose greeting meant more to him than all the world.

He strode quickly into the house, and up to her room; Pauline was sitting at her writing desk, pen in hand; so busily engaged that she did not hear his step, or, know of his presence.

Was she writing to him, forgetting he was to be home

that day?—He tiptoed quietly to her side, peering over her shoulder at what she had written on the white page. As his eyes ran over the lines, a hand of ice seemed to grip his heart; he looked and read again to make sure he was not dreaming. She had written:—

“Is it sinful in life—no joy to take;
To feel like a captive, bound to a stake
By a chain that binds us, and WILL NOT break.”

“Pauline,” he said hoarsely, laying a heavy hand on her shoulder, “I——.” He stopped short, his eyes traveling to the written words on the paper.

“You—you were eavesdropping!” she panted, springing to her feet, her face turning from red to white. “It is like you to do such a thing! I should not be—surprised at it.”

This was his greeting from her after five long weeks of absence; weeks in which he had counted the days, aye, the hours, until he should see her again. He sat down heavily on the nearest chair and looked at her.

Once, while he was away he dreamed she had flown to meet him with kisses, her lovely face radiant with joy; he had lived on that dream; it had nerved him to do and dare, as nothing else in the world could have done. He had made the great speech of his life the next day.

“Pauline, my darling,” he answered huskily, “I had no thought of eavesdropping; my aim was to take you—by surprise;—I could not help but read what you had written;—it went through my heart like a knife, for the fear sprang into it—that you—were not—happy, my love. Oh, tell me, that this fear is groundless, darling, or you will break my heart.”

Pauline was not one to resort to a falsehood; she would tell the truth at any cost, thus challenged.

“You have known from the start that I was the most unhappy girl in the world,” she answered with a sob in her voice; “why dwell on it.”

“Unhappy!” he echoed, looking at her in wonder, “have I not done everything in God’s world to please you, and make you the happiest of women?”

He tried to catch her hand, but she drew back from him coldly. “Happy!” she repeated, “you knew that was impossible, when I married you—without—love—because it appeared to be my father’s dying command. I speak the word plainly—COMMAND,—even while he knew that every throb of my heart belonged to another.

She hid her face in her hands, her slender form shaking with convulsive sobs, adding:—“my life is growing so unbearable—I cannot—stand it!”

Daniel Weslow had risen slowly to his feet; his face was as pale as death; his right hand gripped the back of a chair. He resembled a giant oak that had been struck to the heart’s core by a flash of blinding lightning; struck and maimed.

He looked at her with eyes from which all the brightness, light, and joy had fled; as a man’s eyes look who has been suddenly stricken with blindness which has shut out the light of the world forevermore.

“Pauline!” he whispered chokingly, “are you telling me—there has been—another man in your life? I pray God I have not heard—aright.”

She was weeping so piteously she could not answer him; she could only nod in the affirmative.

He came to her side, taking her hands forcibly, but very gently from her tear stained face. She could not look up at him.

“Oh, my wife, my darling wife whom I have loved so well—better than life itself, how can I believe this! I am stunned! bewildered. I—I—married a very young girl;—who was scarcely more than a dreaming child;—not one who had known another love,—the caress of another man’s arms, another man’s kisses on her lips. Tell me that you have been saying these things to frighten me, my darling;—God would not be so—cruel—to me!”

Pauline’s heart softened a little toward him when she saw how hard he was taking it;—she wished she had never made this confession to him,—but—had he not wrung it from her lips? He had loved her as few men love,—and these lips—had uttered—his death-warrant.

He rose unsteadily to his feet, looking at her with his hungry heart in his gaze. “Who is the man who won your heart; will you tell me, Pauline?” he queried wistfully. Her answer nearly took his breath away.

“Hugh Boyd!”

He reeled back from her as though she had struck him a blow. “Boyd!” he gasped, “God!—surely not that thief, libertine, all around rascal!”

She remembered those were the very words her father had used in denouncing her lover, and she took up the battle instantly in defense of Hugh.

“You shall not stand another instant in my presence, denouncing the man I loved then, and now, and will always love!” she cried,—“Go!”

Daniel Weslow turned, and with unsteady steps quitted the room. He was just about leaving the house,—to go he knew not where,—caring still less, when he stumbled against Mrs. Bemis in the main hall.

She saw instantly, by his white face, some terrible thing had befallen him. “Where are you going, Mr. Daniel,” she asked, “I wanted so much to have a few minutes with you.”

“Tomorrow!” he muttered, “not now!—I am dazed—I cannot—think.”

She took him by the hand, just as she had been wont to do when he was a boy,—drawing him gently into her cozy sitting room.

She seated him in the chair he loved best to sit in, stroking his two trembling hands. “You look ill, my dear boy,” she murmured, “tell mammy, as you used to call me,—what is troubling you so; I—I—would give my life, Mr. Daniel—if by doing that, I could ward off a great sorrow from you.”

He had not intended to tell her,—nor confide in any one, but, somehow, the custom of long years back,—in which he had kept no secret from this kindly old soul to whom he was so dear, prevailed. He longed for consolation,—advice, and ere he realized what he was doing, he had faltered out the whole story to her pitying ears.

To say that Mrs. Bemis was shocked, puts it mildly; her face did not, however, betray her consternation. She drew up her chair beside him, again taking his hands in hers. In that one moment of time she had decided upon the advice she was to give him; she felt sure she could talk him into doing just as she said.

“Daniel, boy,—you are making a mountain out of a mole-hill,” she said,—doing her best to smile. “Know this;—almost every young girl has a—youthful romance, which they are wont to miscall—a love affair.

“The wise parents of girls usually, I might say—always nip it in the bud,—encouraging a worthier suitor for their child’s hand.

“She weds the man her parents have encouraged. Some of these girls imagine, for a little while, that they are still in love with the romantic other fellow; a wise husband pays no attention to this girlish nonsense knowing, in good time, she will forget that girlish fancy, and turn to his—as the sun-flower turns to the sun. Have a little patience, Daniel, boy and I promise you all will be well, between you and Pauline.

“Just forget all the foolish child—for she is little else than that—said, and did; love her as dearly as you have always done; pet her; give her her own way, and make no allusion to this little flurry. You know, there is a line of poetry which tells us—‘True love never runs smooth.’

“You must not forget this is the great night of your life, boy; ere the sun rises you will be elected—Senator—You will be Oklahoma’s best loved leader; she will be proud of you; trust my word for it.”

“Do you really believe this, Mrs. Bemis?” he asked slowly, a sunny smile chasing the heavy clouds from his face. “Do not lead me to hope,—unless you know you are right;—you are a woman;—you know the hearts of girls—I do not; tell me, truly,—if I appear to take

no notice of what has happened,—will it be all right—with Pauline?” he queried anxiously.

“Have no fear on that score, Mr. Daniel,” she assured him. She was glad that at that moment a number of delegates called, and his attention would be so engrossed with them, he would not have time to think over his sorrow.

When she saw him engaged in the library with them, she went directly to Pauline’s room. She knew she would have to use much diplomacy with the girl whom she had made up her mind to influence in Mr. Daniel’s favor if it lay within human power.

She found Pauline lying on her divan weeping bitterly.

In a moment her motherly arms were about her, the girl’s curly head pillowed on her breast. “What a silly little girl to weep,” she began,—I want to assure you dear, Mr. Daniel will be elected senator in this great contest,—and everyone is saying,—even I,—that you deserve all the praise of it;—for your devotion to him in this trying experience. We will be sure to know the result by eleven, tonight; the whole town will gather about the place, and he will have to come out and speak to the people.

“You must be by his side;—that will give him ambition to say wonderful things—that will—make history for him—and—you.

“In this hour, love can make or break a man.”

She felt the girl’s slender form tremble in her clasp, even heard her mutter under her breath “I—cannot—I—am—going—back—to my—father!”

“You will not fail him, when the respect and devotion of every one in his home town,—and of course you most of all, means so much to him—.

“Realize, dear Pauline,—in your hands lies his VICTORY, or DOWNFALL!”

The good woman talked for an hour or more, bringing up every telling argument to advance Mr. Daniel’s cause which she could think of.

At length Pauline raised her head from her shoulder whispering:—

“My—my—husband and I have had a terrible falling out, Mrs. Bemis; we—tacitly—understood we were never to look upon each other’s face again.”

“Tut, tut! my dear,” laughed Mrs. Bemis, “a mere lover’s quarrel. I—want you to promise me that you will take no notice of it. Mr. Daniel is sure to forget it by the time he left the room;— he is too wonderful a man to hold anger against the dearest little wife in the world.

“Remember the people will expect to see you with him on the porch; he will be grateful to you for your presence beside him,—and oh, my dear, so will I. If you hesitated about standing by his side, the dear fellow would feel so miserable he might be tempted to throw over the senatorship then and there. Believe me it is a close tie, the greatest Oklahoma has ever known, every one says. Stand by Mr. Daniel, dear, wont you?”

Her persuasion wrung from Pauline a reluctant assent.

A little later Mrs. Bemis hurried to Daniel who was now in the library alone. She stooped over him, brushed the stray locks back from his brow, whispering:—

“Pauline is jubilant; she is sure you are to win; and if her hopes come true, and the cheering crowd gather about the place—shouting to see you, she intends to come out on the balcony hand in hand with you, and thank them for electing her dear husband.”

“By gingo is that so!” cried Daniel, leaping from his chair and dancing around the room like a hilarious school-boy, in his exuberant excitement. “You were right, and I was wrong, Mrs. Bemis! Oh, what a fool I was to doubt my darling wife,—God bless her!”

Looking at him, Mrs. Bemis told herself she had done the greatest day’s work of her life. Just as had been predicted, Daniel Weslow was elected by a large majority. At midnight all of Oklahoma City, bearing torches and fairly mad with delight, gathered in front of the Weslow home to pay the new Senator homage. Daniel heard their cheers to the echo and their calls for him as he stood irresolute in the corridor.

Then he saw Mrs. Bemis and Pauline approaching from the other end.

He never knew how Mrs. Bemis hurried her along, apparently smiling and nodding at happy words Pauline was uttering,—while in reality Pauline was saying never a word. It was Mrs. Bemis who flung open the door that led to the porch, pushed her forward and slipped Pauline’s nerveless hand in Daniel’s.

All he realized was—the great cheering, and that Pauline was standing by his side, her hand clasped in his, proud of his victory; As her father had predicted, the old Senator’s daughter, was now the younger Senator’s wife.

Then and there Daniel was silently asking God to make him worthy of not only Pauline's confidence, but the confidence of the people as well; he would do the best that was in him for them.

Reardon stood amidst the throng, listening to their plaudits with darkening brow. From the moment of their appearance on the balcony he had been watching not the Senator,—but—his lovely young wife.

He knew that electing Winslow to the senate, meant that he would soon leave the west with his wife,—for—Washington. But that would not take place probably, for some three months later.

“Much can take place in three months,” he thought as he threw away his cigar and made his way into the house with a favored few, to offer Weslow his congratulations—and—have a few moments' chat with his wife.

This hope was doomed to disappointment, however. He found the Senator surrounded by his ardently admiring friends;—Pauline was not there. No one would ever know how the faithful old housekeeper was working in Mr. Daniel's interest, to patch up the breach between them—her joy was unspeakable when Pauline promised she would try a little longer to live with them;—at least until it was time to go east,—where her father, her home, and all her friends were.

Mrs. Bemis felt grateful for this respite; surely, by that time her adored Mr. Daniel would have won his way to Pauline's heart; for, a great love *must* win love in return,—blotting out any romance of the past.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER ELECTION

“Where apples redden, do not pry,
Lest we lose our Eden, You and I.”

* * * * *

“Yet ah! Why should we know our fate
Since sorrow never comes too late
And happiness too swiftly flies
Thought would destroy their paradise
Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.”

THE days that followed, were busy ones for Daniel Weslow. Every one was jubilant over his election. Old people walked weary miles to look upon his face and shake his hand; children brought him flowers; bands came from every part of the state to serenade him; every one wished him well.

He had very little time to devote to Pauline, and was obliged to be away from home much. It was well for his peace of mind that he did not know the relief this was to Pauline.

She tried her best to be honorable, to forget Hugh-ey,—but—love such as she had known could not be torn from the heart so easily.

“And then she was aware of,—first
That she, not knowing it, had nursed
His memory till it grew a part—
A heart within her very heart.”

She had not heard one word from him; she wondered that he could give her up so readily; even a letter filled with bitter, angry reproach from him would have appeased her; but his silence, that was something she could not brook calmly.

She would have been desperately miserable, out there in the far west, had it not been for the letters of her father and Marcelle, and occasionally from Mrs. Holt. Her father's were quite as much for Daniel as for herself, showing in every line how fond he was of him. Marcelle's were bright and newsy. She always ended with:—"It was so good of you to insist that I stay here and look after your dear old father. I am doing my best; he has turned to me to provide for him the many little comforts that he depended on *you* for, dear."

Mrs. Holt's letters always wound up with:—"The French girl is still here; looks as if she had no notion of ever going. She is always at your father's elbow. He used to ask—*my*—opinion on the household matters; now—he asks *her's*; I shall be so glad when you come back east; so glad."

By this Pauline gathered—the old housekeeper had taken a most violent dislike to the pretty French girl; she did not attach undue importance to it, however. She was not sufficiently worldly-wise to do so.

She did not see the covert meaning Mrs. Holt meant to convey in her letter—that the wily French girl had set her cap for the old Senator. This was the case, however. Marcelle Vallean was a girl without scruple—when she found the man whom she could

have loved had slipped from her grasp by wedding another, she dried her tears with grim determination—since she could not marry for love,—she would marry for—money.

The Senator filled the latter requirement exactly. He was old and bald-headed, but, he was credited to be worth nearly a million.

Marcelle took Pauline's place in the household, soon making herself quite a necessity to his comfort. It was Marcelle who read his morning paper to him, helped him sort his legal papers, even typed off much of his correspondence when he felt inclined not to go down to the office.

"I do not see how I ever got along without you, child," he often declared gratefully. On one of these occasions Marcelle looked up at him with shining eyes, murmuring softly:—

"Am I indeed necessary to your—happiness, Senator? Do you mean it?"

"Yes," he answered, readily enough, not supposing she was leading him into deep water. "I certainly owe you a debt of gratitude."

"I have made you forget—your—loneliness?" she queried.

He nodded, "I should have been very lonely, but for you," he assented.

She crept nearer to him, raising her lovely young face to his aged one, whispering tremulously:—"You were lonely because you have shut love and loving from your yearning heart, which is the mistaken idea of many a widower;—they need a companion, one

nearer and dearer than all others,—yet,—stumble along in life's path—alone. I have been wondering—oh, Senator Rae, I have been wondering why such a noble man as yourself,—so capable of making some good woman happy, why you are not contemplating—marrying again.”

He looked down into the flushed, beautiful young face in amazement. “I—marry again!” he echoed. “I have never had such a thought; the dear wife whom I have lost was the best woman that ever lived; I would never put any one in her place; her memory is sacred to me.”

“But, Senator,” murmured the sweetly pleading voice, “can memory—suffice? Are there not moments when your very soul cries out for the touch of a human hand—for companionship,—aye—and—love? A man is as young as his heart is;—your's has not grown old. You have done all that the best husband would do for the dear departed,—now—you should pay a little consideration to yourself, and for a mate to love you through your declining years, you are so worthy of it.”

Senator Rae looked down at the girl, who had come and knelt down on the hassock at his feet, in utter amazement, and that is putting it mildly.

To add to his bewilderment, he saw great tears coursing down the beautiful cheeks. He never afterward remembered just how it occurred, but, the blood which had been wont to course so calmly through his veins, took a sudden leap, instantly flooding his heart and brain;—“Marcelle,” he whispered,—a veritable

fever burning its way from his heart to his lips, as he whispered hoarsely.

"I am old, now, dear girl, I would never dare think of—love,—or expect I could inspire so wonderful a passion in any woman's heart."

"No one could be thrown for any length of time in your presence—without—learning to—care for you," she whispered, hiding her face in both of her hands.

The Senator bent forward, taking her hands in his.

"Am I to understand that I—though God knows it was unwittingly on my—part,—have inspired love in your young heart, Marcelle?" he asked, gravely.

She nodded, turning away from him! he did not see the curl on her lip which her handkerchief hid.

"How am I to repair what I have caused!" he exclaimed more to himself than to her. "Poor Marcelle! Poor little girl!"

"I am going away from you—out into the cold world," she announced. "After the confession which has been wrung from my lips in a moment of madness,—I can no longer stay—unless you wanted me——"

"Unless I proposed marriage to you?" he asked breathlessly. Her smile through her tears answered him.

"Are you quite sure of yourself,—that you actually love an old man like me,—and would be willing to marry me?" he queried, incredulously.

"Yes," she responded promptly, almost before he had finished his sentence, wondering if he was wavering.

“Then it shall be as you wish, dear girl,” he whispered. He was dumbfounded when she suddenly threw her arms about him, giving him a resounding kiss, exclaiming gleefully, “Then we are betrothed; but I can scarcely believe it is really true, until your engagement ring is shining on my finger—a splendid ring I am sure it will be,—one worthy of such a grand lover as yourself, dear.”

After the Senator went to his room, he paced uneasily up and down for long hours, questioning himself as to whether he had done a wise thing. When he had heard, or read, of well to do, elderly widowers marrying young women, his remark had always been: “There is no fool like an old fool;—a man should have sense enough to know it is against human nature for a young woman to love an aged man;—they do well to endure his presence. The man’s wealth ties unto himself her freedom; but all the gold in the universe could not purchase for him—her affection. Mixed with his contempt was pity for the old men ever catering to the whims of impatient young wives. And—now,—he was about to join the band he had always ridiculed. Now he understood, as never before, how such marriages came about, and the belief, past all doubting, that love might still be won by him. He argued with himself that it was neither wise, nor best, for man to live alone, passing his days in loneliness when he might enjoy the presence of a loving mate;—one young, strong, helpful to lean upon in his declining years.” Thus, men convince themselves

against their better judgment, that mismated hearts become congenial:—

“Two souls with but one single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one.”

The next morning Senator Rae informed Marcelle that he had concluded the marriage might as well take place at once—a man of his age could not afford to waste time. To his surprise she demurred.

“We will wait awhile,” she declared. “In the meantime we must keep our betrothal a profound secret,—even from the servants here.”

The truth regarding the situation was:—In the morning’s papers she had read of Daniel Weslow’s victory in being elected to the Senate. She knew that meant he and Pauline would soon take up their residence in Washington. They would be sure to invite her to visit them. As guest in the Senator’s home she would be brought into contact with many a millionaire; they could not all be old; among them she might find one young, and good to look upon, who had wealth as well. In that case, she ruminated, it would not take her long to throw over her aged, bald-headed lover for one more suited to her fancy. She meant to give herself every chance ere tying herself down.

Of course a young sweetheart’s word is law to an aged wooer. It was agreed that the announcement of the betrothal,—as well as to when the wedding should take place, should rest entirely with Marcelle.

At this stage of the affair, Mrs. Holt, the house-keeper, unconsciously brought the matter to a climax by insisting upon a few words in private with the

Senator. He did not like the tone of voice in which she made the request, but he had no choice but to acquiesce.

Mrs. Holt did not mince matters, but got to the point at once. In a few words she told him that he was exposing himself to scandal,—in fact, it was the talk of the neighborhood that he was harboring beneath his roof a young and beautiful unmarried woman who was neither kith nor kin to him. That such hospitality was open to criticism. She ended by informing him if he persisted in Miss Vallean's remaining there, she would not stand for it,—on the contrary, after thirty years of faithful service, she would tender her resignation—and—leave.

The Senator was furious! How dared they speak lightly of Miss Vallean's remaining beneath his roof! He would show all the old busy-bodies, and would-be scandal mongers; ha! he'd show 'em. Mrs. Holt might do as she pleased; no one on earth should dictate to him how he was to run his home, or whom he should entertain beneath his roof.

Marcelle, who was passing the door, stopped to listen; she came hurriedly into the drawing room, taking the subject out of the Senator's mouth, and settling it her own way.

"I will go, Mrs. Holt," she said, haughtily, "I will take up my residence at an art club for the present, until,—well, I have just received a letter from Mrs. Weslow, announcing she will soon be in Washington, and inviting me to pay her a long visit there,—which I intend to accept."

Mrs. Holt bowed stiffly and withdrew from the room. She was overjoyed at the prospect the hated young French girl was to leave the house, and at once, but she felt greatly worried that Pauline intended to harbor her. "She will make trouble between our little girl and Daniel Weslow," she ruminated, "somehow, I feel it in my heart; I can only say—God forbid."

Despite the Senator's earnest appeals to Marcelle to marry him at once, and thus end matters, he found her firm in her refusal. He offered to make over to her then and there three-fourths of his splendid fortune if she would consent. She was inexorable.

"That shows me my darling is not marrying me for money," he thought exultantly. "It will certainly be for love, and love only."

He stood long before the pier glass, studying earnestly his reflection there. His figure was still straight, what hair he had was white; he wore spectacles—but he saw himself as he was forty years before, a spruce young man, who might well enter the race even for a young woman's heart and hand,—and win. Infatuation had blinded him effectually.

Marcelle wrote to Pauline at once, accepting her invitation, then she left the Rae home with all possible haste.

With apparent reluctance she accepted the large roll of bills the Senator insisted upon pressing upon her, and with still greater reluctance gave him the promise she would let him know when it was exhausted. She had no present need of it, for the cash Hugh Boyd had handed her was intact in her pocket.

She felt highly elated at the prospect that she would not now be obliged to pass her afternoons and evenings with the doughty old Senator who regaled her, supposedly, with tales of the battles he had fought, and won in the Senate. From all this glory he was sure to drift into the one subject he was keen to dwell upon, his rheumatism, and what the different specialists thought they knew about it; his attacks of lumbago and gout and how he had bested them, until Marcelle was ready to scream, he was getting so frightfully on her nerves.

Until she went on her Washington visit, she knew she would have to endure his presence if he called during the afternoons,—evenings, his feebleness kept him confined to the house by the doctor's strict orders.

Therefore, evenings she could have her fling of the delights of the Great White Way; she could enjoy the cabarets, if they ran them here as they did in gay, mad Paree,—go to the still gayer French masked balls. Enjoy life and youth—as she had done in the past—to the top of her bent.

Pauline received Marcelle's graceful letter of acceptance, and one from Mrs. Holt, by the same mail. She could not help but smile as she glanced over the latter. Most of Mrs. Holt's letter was about Marcelle.

In part, she wrote:—"Thank th' Lord that French girl has left, bag and baggage,—though your father seemed considerably put out over it.

"If you take my advice, Pauline, my dear little love, you will not let her into your house when you

and Daniel get to Washington. She will make trouble for you if you do,—mark my words. She cut the picture of Daniel from the paper, had it magnificently framed, and on her dresser. She did not cut your's out—which was beside his. She took the picture with her.”

Pauline left that letter lying carelessly about, open; Daniel happened to come across it, and carelessly enough, read it. His amazement was great that this girl whom he scarcely remembered, should have cut out, framed, and had taken his picture away with her. He found himself puzzling over the incident, not once, but many times. He wished Pauline took enough interest in him to do that. He remembered there was a picture of this girl Marcelle on Pauline's mantel. The next time he went into her boudoir he looked for it.

CHAPTER X

WHEN HEARTS ARE DRIFTING APART

“Great and good persons well may be,
Free from guilt, but not from envy free,
Envy dodges success, and every victor’s crown
Is lined with thorns and worn midst scoffs.”

* * * * *

“Known mischiefs have their cure;
But doubts have none,
And better is despair than faithless hope
Mixed with a killing fear.”

DURING Daniel Weslow’s busy days, Reardon placed his services entirely at Pauline’s disposal. She was invited everywhere, and as she could not go alone, she was glad of the young attorney as an escort.

They went hither and thither in the spacious automobile Daniel had provided for his wife. Much to Reardon’s annoyance, the chauffeur usually had one ear so turned that he could hear all that was said by the occupants of the car. Reardon made up his mind to get rid of him. Soon after, the man was offered twice as much wages as he was getting, to go to a place some distance away, with a home for himself and family thrown into the bargain. He accepted with alacrity.

Pauline’s dismay was great at this contretemps, es-

pecially as Daniel was away. As usual Reardon came to her rescue, when she was in difficulty.

"Do not let that worry you in the least, Mrs. Weslow," he said. "I am quite as capable of managing a car as he is, and will gladly take my place at the wheel until he can be replaced."

Pauline was very grateful for this timely assistance. On several occasions as he placed her in the car, she noted an odd smile playing about his lips; she did not know he was saying to himself:—"Two is company, three is none."

On these trips he talked to her gaily, striving as he had never striven before to interest, and please. Pauline found herself more than once congratulating herself upon having so agreeable a companion to help her pass the dreary days. Every one noted what a handsome couple Pauline and Reardon made, even commenting upon it. Others whispered that plain Daniel Weslow must be out of his mind to permit his beautiful young wife to go gallivanting about so much with such a handsome, fascinating—even dangerous—man. Reardon had the reputation of being a decided Don Juan among women who were young and beautiful. He had broken many hearts, and had ridden sneeringly away.

The people who knew him well declared he was enjoying a desperate flirtation with Weslow's young wife; some insisted the unsuspecting husband should be tipped off concerning it, but there was not one of them brave enough to go to Daniel Weslow with such a story on his lips. Meanwhile, Reardon was doing

his best to win from Pauline a deeper sentiment than kindly regard, or friendship.

He had commenced the game he was playing for the mere sport of it; but gradually he became aware that for him it would end in a life and death struggle. A fierce, overwhelming passion filled his heart and soul, a maddening, destructive torrent that had overswept all bonds.

One intense longing possessed him, which was,—that Pauline and Daniel Weslow should drift apart—if she were but free he might woo and win her. He determined that his attentions to Pauline, which every one noticed but herself,—might be the means of bringing this about.

Although he had been much alone with her, riding to and fro, he had never dared overstep the bonds of propriety by making any sort of advances denoting tenderness to her. He could see she was not the kind of a girl to brook it. He knew she did not love Daniel Weslow, but for all that his honor would be safe in her keeping. He knew too, even though Hugh Boyd were to appear, though they had been lovers, she would not allow him to approach her on the old footing. Her high sense of honor and duty would be her shield. Yes, she and Hugh were parted for good. This thought gave him exultation,—keen joy.

In his breast pocket he carried a dozen or more letters which Boyd had sent to him under separate cover, begging, threatening, urging him to deliver them to Pauline and get an answer from her for him.

Reardon always wrote back he “had delivered the

letters," adding, "If she does not choose to reply, how can I help it!" He knew well Boyd would not venture to come west,—with half of the detectives in the country searching for him—to nab him. Every now and then Reardon would make a bonfire of Boyd's accumulated missives, smiling grimly at the thought—burned letters can tell no tales.

As for Pauline, she thought more highly of Reardon than he had any reason to suspect; she noted how solicitous he was for her every comfort; how very entertaining he was; how eager to be of service to her, and the light that flashed into his eyes, and the flush that rose to his cheeks—if she remarked the drive had been a pleasant one, or that she had enjoyed the afternoon. Commonplace, courteous remarks upon her part, but they seemed to afford him great happiness. At last she noticed with much surprise, that it was not her fancy, but his hand actually trembled as he helped her in or out of her car, and his arm lingered longer than was necessary as he folded her wraps about her shoulders. Girl like, the thought she had made a conquest, amused Pauline as the knowledge dawned upon her. She had accepted an invitation to attend a ball which was to be given in honor of Daniel and herself. He had telegraphed he would not be home, that Reardon would take her over; she must not miss it, for it was to be the most brilliant affair ever held in Oklahoma in honor of a Senator-elect.

Pauline promised herself that she would go this once, but henceforth it must be with a chauffeur, and not Lawyer Reardon, her husband's friend. It had

also dawned upon Pauline why he did not get her a new chauffeur as he had promised—he desired to drive her about—himself.

This thought was most disquieting to her; she did not speak of it to Mrs. Bemis who seemed to have already formed a great aversion to the handsome young man who was taking Mr. Daniel's wife about during his absence. Pauline would rather not have attended this ball, but, as her husband had been so insistent that she should go, she saw no way out of it.

Night drew on exceedingly cold; a heavy snow lay on the ground, a full moon shed its radiance over the earth, the sky overhead being sown with myriads of twinkling stars.

“A wonderful night,” remarked Reardon, as he helped her into the car, which he had had warmly heated. “You have in store for you some twenty miles of splendid scenery. The roads over mountain and plain have been traversed so much all danger of trouble with automobiles is eliminated. If you would sit in the front seat, beside me, on this occasion, I could point out much that would interest,—won't you?”

Pauline did not know how she could refuse this, the only actual request he had ever made of her, and took, mechanically, the place indicated.

She saw that he was looking long and earnestly at her, making no attempt to break the silence by pointing out the places they were passing.

For the first time in his life, Reardon was near losing control of himself; he did not see the stretch of

road ahead, or any of the scenery around and about them; all that he saw was a beautiful young woman with a face framed in curling golden hair, which was fairer than a poet's dream—eyes as bright as the stars above them; red lips and dimpled cheeks in which the color was coming and going. She wore a long enveloping wrap of soft white fur, its hood being drawn over her head.

“You are looking like a goddess tonight, Paul—Mrs. Weslow,” he breathed. “I wish with all my heart I had been born an artist, that I might paint upon canvas—you, as you are tonight.”

Pauline flushed; it was sweet to be flattered, but her woman's good judgment warned her she must not encourage it.

“What place is that?” she queried, ignoring his remark and pointing at random out of the window. He turned his gaze in that direction.

“You mean that lone, tumbled down cabin?” She nodded.

“That has quite a bit of romance connected with it,” he responded. “As the story goes, a young man, a violin player, and his sweetheart were returning from a dance. He had been the only musician; just as they reached that place, they heard the baying of wolves—coyotes, in the distance—which each moment sounded nearer and nearer. The girl clung to her lover in mortal fright. Both realized the pack were on their trail; and it would be but a question of moments ere they were upon them. Like an inspiration came the thought to him to reach the roof by the un-

finished ladder alongside of the wall. She did his bidding quickly, he climbing up after her. He had barely succeeded in drawing the ladder up after him when the pack reached the spot. All night long she clung to him; still he played his violin, played as he had never played before. The strains of weird music held the pack at bay until morning and rescuers appeared."

Pauline looked frightened; it was a weird tale. He laughed and turned the conversation and her thoughts into another channel. He talked so brightly of the people whom she was to meet, and their great expectation of seeing her, that Pauline soon forgot all save the pleasure in store for her. Soon after, the lights of the place where the grand ball was to be held, loomed up ahead of them.

There was a buzz of expectancy which suddenly hushed to intense silence as the young wife of their Senator-elect entered the ball-room leaning upon Rear-don's arm. This was instantly followed with deafening applause and cheers of welcome.

Ah, how they must love Daniel to accord her such a greeting.

The people of Oklahoma, gathered there, had decided they should either like or dislike Daniel Westlow's wife—at first sight.

As she advanced into their midst,—a slight girlish person in filmy white, without other ornament than a single pink rose at her belt, her golden hair drawn loosely back, and no makeup on her face save the delicate coloring God had given her,—her violet eyes

looking appealingly into theirs, every one in the grand ball-room felt his and her heart warm toward her. The women took to her at once, and there was not a man present who would not have fought to a finish for her.

Reardon was intensely proud of her, delighted at the enthusiastic welcome she received. He had the first dance with her, but he held her so closely Pauline felt disturbed. She was beginning to feel a vague distrust of him. He would dance with no one else during the entire evening.

The Governor, a bachelor, though a lover of woman beautiful, paid profound attention to Pauline; he had not been able to reach there for the first dance, which he regretted sincerely.

Reardon watched them as they glided through the measures the length and breadth of the room, burning anger in his gaze; a fact which many noticed but refrained from commenting upon.

Reardon drew a sigh of relief when Pauline announced she wished to go home. It was the Governor who escorted her to her car and assisted her in, even then lingering to chat with her.

Every one at the ball gathered on the long porch to bid her good-night, and thank her for coming.

At last they were off, and on the lonely road homeward again.

"It has been a delightful evening," mused Pauline, more to herself than her companion. Reardon made no reply. He seemed to be driving the car most recklessly, she noticed.

At length he turned to her abruptly, saying, "You danced with the Governor half a dozen times."

She turned and looked at him in astonishment, though she answered calmly "Possibly." The smile on her lips maddened him.

He bent nearer her, so near his hot breath scorched her face.

"I could not have endured it a moment longer!" he cried hoarsely. "Had you danced with him again I would have torn you from his arms, struck him!"

Pauline turned sharply to him in unfeigned amazement; she could scarcely believe she had heard aright. The expression on his face terrified her; he was very pale, and his eyes gleamed like coals of fire in the uncertain light within the car. She was not worldly-wise. She did not know that, in such a state, it would have been diplomatic to have temporized with him instead of angering him. She said cuttingly:

"How dare you presume to utter such words? What right have you to interest yourself as to whom I shall dance with? If my husband does not object to my dancing with the Governor, I do not see why you should, Mr. Reardon."

He laughed the harshest laugh that ever fell from human lips. "*Your husband!*"—he echoed, "What do you care what he thinks or does; you do not love him! Aye! you despise Daniel Weslow, to whom you are yoked in marriage."

She drew back from him with a gasp of dismay, her eyes dilating, but he did not notice, going on recklessly: "It does not matter how I know of it, or the

fact you were forced as it were into this bond, bitterly against your will,—the fact exists, you had no love for Weslow at the time of your marriage; you have less for that sage-bush-of-a-man, now!”

“Stop!” cried Pauline, “I command you!”

He laughed again that horrible laugh. “Not until I have finished,” he cried, hoarsely; “you shall listen to me here and now, Pauline. The clown you are tied to cannot prevent me from telling you that I—love—you! Love you madly, desperately, as man never loved woman before. You and I——”

The sentence was never finished; Pauline had risen to her feet. “Stop!” she shrilled in a ringing voice, and the command was accompanied with a stinging blow from her hand upon his mouth. It surprised even herself that she could hit so hard.

The sudden onslaught surprised him; for an instant he lost his grip on the wheel, jolting backward. With the sudden backing of the car, in that instant Pauline seized the wheel, with her right hand, with her left flinging open the door, pushed him by main force through it. The backward jolt of the car aided her. Reardon landed face downward in a deep snowdrift, from which he found much difficulty in attempting to struggle to his feet.

Pauline beheld the lights from a small inn a few rods away, and dark forms running toward them. Quick as a thought she pulled the door to, gave the

It was some moments ere she fully recovered her wheel a rapid whirl, and the next instant was lost to sight in the distance.

scattered senses. Should she tell her husband of the humiliation she had been subject to, or keep the distressing affair from him?

She well knew Daniel Weslow was no sage-bush of a man; if he had but the slightest inkling of what had taken place it would mean a combat to the death between him—and the cur—Reardon.

So intent was Pauline with these conflicting thoughts, she was scarcely conscious of which road she was taking. Looking out, in consternation, she realized they had not passed that way before. *She had—lost—her—road.* Simultaneously with that conviction, a sound that struck terror to her heart fell upon her ear—the unmistakable howling of coyotes in the distance, growing more distinct each instant.

CHAPTER XI

MISTRUST

“I want to give to others hope and faith,
I want to do all that the Master saith.
I want to live aright from day to day
I’m sure I shall not pass again this way.”

PAULINE stopped the automobile, looking in affright about her; yes, she had lost her way, that was evident. Should she turn back? While she was pondering over this, a chorus of howls fell with a distinctness unmistakable upon her startled ear. Coyotes! Her face blanched, great beads of cold perspiration stood out on her forehead; the hands on the wheel trembled like aspen leaves. In all her petted young life she had never faced danger before now—.

Nearer and nearer came the great dark flock of moving creatures, by leaps and bounds, plainly discernible in the bright, white moonlight; their blood-curdling cries grew fiercer and louder as they advanced. For a moment Pauline was so dazed with terror, her brain refused to think, then like a flash it occurred to her that her only chance of escape was to send the machine forward at top speed. Grasping the wheel with all the strength she possessed, it quickly shot forward like a bow from an arrow. The wild howls of rage were more ferocious than before; glancing back, she saw the large

pack were following closely, in hot pursuit. Through her brain flitted the realization that her only hope lay in dashing forward with lightning like speed gradually out-distancing them.

She had counted without knowledge of the coyote's wonderful power of endurance. Mile after mile flew the car, dashing through the white waste of snow. She had left the road far behind her and was whirling over the trackless plains,—over which the foot of man rarely traversed in the summer time,—never in winter. Pauline had long since lost all sense of direction; the only realization which came to her, was to send the car forward—forward—. Only the night-sky, and the stars overhead saw that terrible race between that automobile and the yelping coyotes.

She had gone around in a circle, miles in distance, with the car, most of the time, up to the hubs in the trackless, frozen snow. She was conscious of a long, dark streak ahead;—a road! a road! The car plunged into it, wobbling woefully under her unsteady clutch; then, suddenly, like a trembling, overworked steed, spent and broken, it stood still.

A cry broke from Pauline's ashen lips. She tried to utter a prayer. In that awful moment she forgot how to pray. In a trice, the terrors of the western plains were upon her, surrounding the car at which they leaped, and threw themselves bodily against it with deafening howls. She saw their fiery eyes, gleaming fangs, and lapping tongues as they sighted her through the glass, and sensed their prey. Her hands fell paralyzed from the motionless wheel.

“God!—save me!” she gasped. She knew the thin plate glass could not hold out long against the repeated blows of those heavy bodies that were being hurled against it; when the glass would fall, shivered into fragments—they would leap in.

“Father!” she moaned, then her half-crazed thoughts turned to the husband whom she knew would give his life for her, and her lips formed the words, “Daniel! Daniel!—Save me!”

* * * * *

All unconscious of the tragic events happening, Daniel Weslow had reached home from his journey almost an hour before. Owing to the lateness of the hour, he expected to find the household asleep. To his surprise Mrs. Bemis met him at the door, fully dressed, and wearing a cloak and hood. He saw that her face was very pale.

“Oh, Mr. Daniel!” she cried with a sob, “I am so glad you have come!”

“What in the world has happened, mother Bemis, to upset you like this!” he ejaculated in the greatest amazement, taking her hands soothingly.

“It’s about Pauline, your wife!” she gasped. She never knew in what words she explained to him that Pauline had gone to the ball with his friend Reardon, but had not returned, and it was then after two in the morning;—she had telephoned to the place where the ball had taken place, learning it had broken up hours before, and Mrs. Weslow and Mr. Reardon had been the first to take their leave;—and that she was just hurrying out to arouse the towns-people.

Daniel Weslow started back with a cry "My God! My God! they must have met with an accident." Like a flash he tore across the ground to the garage, Mrs. Bemis was at his heels. "That is what I feared," she said. "Let me go with you, Mr. Daniel! See! I have—my—first—aid—kit—with me!" In less time than it takes to recount it, they were tearing up the road in the direction Pauline had gone, faster by far than any express train had ever whirled over the rails.

Not a word was spoken, but Mrs. Bemis knew, by his labored breathing, the agony of fear Daniel was enduring. As they, at last, turned a bend in the road, after traversing some fifteen miles or more,—they both, at the same instant, sighted the automobile standing motionless in the road, surrounded by the coyotes. Mrs. Bemis gasped, her very soul quaking with the horror of the sight. Daniel uttered no word. Pauline, crouching in the bottom of her car, praying for death, heard a fusillade of shots accompanied by yelps from the pack as the wounded took to their heels flying from the scene of danger.

The door of the car was wrenched open, and Daniel sprung through it. The next instant Pauline was in his strong arms, and he was raining kisses down upon her white face.

"Pauline is here—alone;—she has swooned!" he called back to Mrs. Bemis.

When she opened her eyes to consciousness, Pauline found herself in her own room, with Daniel sitting on one side of the bed, Mrs. Bemis on the other, each holding her hand.

“Was it a horrible dream,—a night-mare!” she whispered cowering down among the pillows in abject terror.

Daniel placed his fingers over her lips. “You are not going to talk about it now,” he said. “After a good long sleep, you shall tell us all about it,—not now, my dearie.”

To their surprise, and gratification, Pauline closed her eyes, and fell fast asleep like a tired, obedient child. While she had been unconscious, Daniel had made diligent inquiries for Reardon, marveling much that he was not with Pauline,—and fearful that he had met an untimely fate—from the coyotes. His amazement was great, and his anger still greater to learn that he had left the car, and Pauline in it, to purchase cigars at a road-place,—“By some accident,” Reardon had explained to his listener,—Mrs. Weslow must have touched the starter—it had gotten beyond her control, having whirled away in something like a mile a minute speed.

They had searched as best they could, without a conveyance, until day-break; and finding no trace of her, had concluded she must have reached home safely, and last but not least, that Reardon, fearing the Senator’s anger over the contretemps, had left the city by the early train, not disclosing where he was going; he let it be inferred that he might be away until after the sensation concerning the affair, had blown over.

“Reardon is, after all—a cur,” muttered Daniel Weslow angrily. “I shall never overlook, forget, or forgive him for his lack of watchcare.”

When Pauline heard the story Reardon had circulated,

concerning her adventure, she concluded it was wisest and best not to contradict it, so she held her peace.

She was glad beyond words when Daniel informed her a few days later, that he had decided they should go to Washington at once—that she should not remain a day longer than was absolutely necessary in the west—where she had had such a harrowing experience that she refused to ever leave the house again.

“To me, it will always be the beautiful golden west,—God’s country,” he added with wistfulness in his tone, “but, for all that,—your will, and happiness, is my law, dear Pauline.”

Mrs. Bemis was not to accompany them. With many tears she had decided her duty lay in remaining in the beautiful west she so loved, and guarding Daniel’s interests. “You will love this home better than any other”—she said. “It will always be ready for you to come back to.”

Pauline’s joy at the prospect of going east, pained the good soul; she had done so much, everything in human power to make her happy out there in the wonderful west. If Pauline could have left Mr. Daniel behind, Mrs. Bemis would not have felt such a pain in her heart—he was her world.

It had been decided that they should take her father by surprise remaining a week in New York. All during the trip east, Pauline kept wondering why Mrs. Moore, her father’s good old house-keeper, had not written her for nearly a month. She hoped there was nothing the matter.

On reaching her old home, she found there was very

much the matter. Her father received Daniel and herself with evident confusion.

To her amazement, Pauline discovered that every one of the old family servitors had been discharged, and their places filled by strange faces.

Even Mrs. Moore was gone, her father informed her that he had no idea of her whereabouts,—but understood she had left the city.

Pauline's tears over this intelligence, plainly annoyed him. Another thing startled her;—her father's welcome was surely constrained or—was it only her fancy,—that his heart had grown cold to her?

Daniel seemed quite as astonished as herself at the dismissal of the old stand-bys who had loved and served the old Senator so faithfully.

“They wanted to run my business, and I would have none of that!” he declared testily.

Daniel felt that there was something behind that, but made no comment.

The house was filled with French maids, under a French house-keeper, who jabbered incessantly, in whispers in their native tongue. Their frowns and shrugging shoulders, as they glanced at the Senator's daughter, told him quite as plainly as words could have done, Pauline was not welcome there. He hoped from the bottom of his heart that his young wife would not notice it.

In every room they entered, Pauline saw new and beautiful pictures of Marcelle;—in the drawing room, a new and marvelous oil painting of her,—where her own mother's portrait used to hang.

Her father saw her astonishment, but made no excuses. Inwardly, he was lecturing himself thus:—

“No man should permit his children to run him, or dictate to him in any way, as Marcelle says, “I hate mightily to cross Pauline, who has always had her own way with me,—but,—if it has to be done,—the sooner it is over with, the better.

“You have made some changes,” his daughter remarked, wiping the tears from her eyes, as she looked about the room for the picture which was not—there.

“Yes,” he retorted promptly, “and I will brook no interference from any one on earth, concerning what I do.”

Pauline’s eyes dilated with suppressed emotion. Her father had never spoken to her so sharply, so pointedly before; she could not help but retort with equal spirit:—“If you have no further use for my mother’s portrait,—will you give it to—me?—I will treasure it so dearly.”

Senator Rae flushed scarlet under this tacit rebuke. “When you are settled, in Washington, I will send it to you,” he replied tersely.

Pauline had expected a prompt refusal,—for, in the other days he had loved her mother’s picture more than all his earthly possessions; she was amazed beyond all words that he was willing to part with it so readily, being the only picture they had of her. Everything in and about the house was changed—as well. Pauline was mystified to find many pictures of Daniel, in almost every room,—but not one of—herself. She could not understand the strange change which had taken place.

Casually she inquired after Marcelle, remarking she had not heard from her very recently.

Pauline did not notice what Daniel did,—that the old Senator's wrinkled face flushed a dull red, as he answered in a somewhat constrained voice:—

“She is stopping with a French family next door now; you must go in and see her, Pauline, she will expect that.”

“Marcelle will come to me, father,” corrected Pauline.

The Senator made no response, but his daughter could see he was considerably disturbed. Daniel had been so absorbed in scrutinizing the painting of Marcelle, that he had not heard the conversation. The more he looked at the dark, wonderful eyes that seemed to be looking down into his own,—the more he became convinced that all the pretty French maidens he had encountered everywhere in Paris, certainly looked alike; thus he dismissed the subject; as he turned to Pauline, he was amazed to hear her saying:—

“We shall not stay in New York a week, father; I have concluded to go on to Washington. Her father did not press her very ardently to remain. A few moments later she bade him “Good-night.”

Her own boudoir had been assigned her, and the suite of rooms opposite, to Daniel. When Pauline found herself alone, she gave vent to the bitter disappointment attending her home coming in passionate tears.

She had looked forward to the first hour she should be alone with her father; she had planned to throw herself in his arms, sobbing out on his loving breast—how desolate her life had become; not that Daniel Weslow

had not done everything in his power to make her contented,—nay,—happy, she could not give him, in return, anything save friendship; she meant to confess to her father that she felt quite sure, that friendship—could never deepen into—love, such as he had a right to expect.

Now,—Pauline realized her confession would fall upon cold ears;—he would have no sympathy for her. To make it all the harder for her, she could see her father fairly doted upon Daniel. She thought of the one sentence his letters had always contained:—“He is certainly the finest type of man the sun ever shone on, a he-man—a man’s man.”

Daniel was greatly relieved at Pauline’s decision to go on to Washington without delay; they would be scarcely settled ere he would be obliged to take up his new duties.

“I would be so glad to have you close up this house, and come to Washington to live with us,” said Pauline wistfully, as she kissed her father good-bye. He shook his head resolutely.

“I’ll look in upon you for a visit of a day or two now and then; I do not believe in giving up the comforts of one’s own home to live with a married child;—I shall stretch my legs out under my own table to the last.” He wondered why she clung to him even after she had said good-bye.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT WILL A MAN NOT DO, FOR THE DARLING OF HIS HEART

“There is a grief that wastes the heart,
Like mildew on a tulip’s dyes
When hope deferred, but to depart
Loses its smiles, but keeps its sighs.”

OH, beautiful city of Washington! Wonderful, mysterious Capitol, with its brilliant men, beautiful women, lights, flowers, music and feasting! Where gayety creeps forth with the setting sun, and riots through the long hours until the flickering light of the stars dim, proclaiming the night is done—a new day dawned.

Although a Senator’s daughter, Pauline, a school miss, living in New York, had seen nothing of Washington society; she looked forward to mingling in its gayeties, and, as a new Senator’s wife, of attending the inauguration ball.

Daniel Weslow looked forward to it with dread. He found himself wishing that he had not been elected Senator, being obliged to shoulder the many obligations that went with it. He felt he was in the wrong atmosphere.

Out in God’s country, in the open fields, or among his town-folks, he felt at home; but in drawing-rooms of the Kings of wealth, brushing elbows with titled nobility, in addition to the President, in the White House, and men of highest rank,—he felt ill at ease.

He saw that Pauline was in her element, and with that realization, the knowledge was soon forced upon him—she—was—ashamed of him.

At a dinner given at the palatial home of a brother Senator, he forgot instructions, and raised his knife to his mouth; the look of consternation; and tide of crimson that dyed her face warned him of Pauline's embarrassment over this contretemps. In attempting to raise a fork-full of dancing peas to his mouth, and the mishap that resulted from it, was another unmistakable warning to him that he was out of place, Senator though he was,—in Washington society.

As Pauline watched him, so different from the other gentlemen about him—the words of both Hughey Boyd and Reardon occurred to her, “Mated to a clown.” Amidst her shame over his uncouthness, she felt a degree of pity for him—he was trying so hard to remake his life, make of himself what she wished him to be. Every man with whom he came in contact, recognized his sterling qualities, and took to him accordingly. The hearts of the proudest of the society women warmed to him. Very quickly he gained the sobriquet of:—The Rough Diamond of the Senate. A second Abe Lincoln.

The great inaugural ball, which he was obliged to attend, escorting Pauline, fixed the status of Daniel Weslow's popularity in Washington.

As he beheld Pauline that night, he remembered her in all the long years of pain that followed. She was fairly radiant in a sheath-like gown of shimmering silver, tulle, and pearls. Her golden hair was bound

by a fillet of pearls, pearls encircling her dainty white throat.

“I can hardly believe that so superb a creature—belongs—to me!” he whispered, as they entered the spacious reception room.

Pauline laughed heartily; she knew that he meant, from the bottom of his heart, every word of the implied compliment,—and that careless merry laugh was the last one that crossed her lips for many a long and weary year. Ah! how little do we realize what a few hours may bring forth to change the course of human lives.

Amidst the vast throng of beautiful women, Pauline’s rare beauty shone the fairest. Her dancing, the poetry of grace and motion. Daniel, a wall-flower in a far-off corner, watched her with his heart in his eyes. Amidst all that concourse of the world’s beauties, he saw only—Pauline.

He sorrowed to the heart’s core to see other men’s arms about her in the dance, and ere the ball was scarcely under way, he was wishing heartily that the evening was over, and he could bear Pauline away from the throng of admirers—home—to her home—and—his.

During the course of the evening, even amidst the vast throng, the gracious First Lady of America had singled out the lonely, patient man, and sent for him to be brought to her.

Daniel hesitated, abashed, but was finally coaxed into being escorted to her. She held out her hand, welcoming him so kindly and graciously that somehow,

he felt at his ease with her at once. Despite the demands upon her, she took time to converse with him a few moments. She knew a family who lived in Oklahoma City,—close friends of his. That settled it. He no longer felt like a forlorn stranger; he had found in the President's gracious wife,—a mutual—friend.

He was in excellent spirits as their automobile whirled them homeward.

“I had a present for you, my dear,—something I aimed you should wear at that ball,—but,—I forgot all about it until I saw something like it on a girl. You shall have it as soon as we reach home. It is in my old over-coat pocket. Poor old Mrs. Bemis packed that coat, thinking I might need it; she did not know what fine toggery these Washingtonians wear,—bless her dear heart.”

Owing to the lateness of the hour, when they arrived home, Pauline waited until the morning to discover what Daniel's present to her could be.

That it was something of small value, she concluded, otherwise he would not have thrust it into his over-coat pocket, forgetting all about it until now.

Up in the store-room she found the contents of the trunks were in neat piles upon tables and shelves, awaiting her orders as to their disposition.

She found the over-coat he had been wont to wear “out home” without difficulty, the thought passing through her mind that Mrs. Bemis must have been in the greatest kind of a hurry when she packed it, that she had not taken time to clear the pockets of their contents. In this surmise she was quite correct.

Some half a dozen pockets were looked through ere Pauline found one with something else in it, evidently, besides handkerchiefs and pieces of string.

The pocket yielded two packages, one small, the other a trifle larger. As there was nothing about either to indicate which one was for her, she proceeded to open both. The smaller package contained a wrist watch. With a smile on her lips she turned carelessly to the other package, opening it. One glance, and the blood in her veins stood still; the heart in her bosom seemed to break with one awful throb; the sunlight that streamed in through the window to suddenly darken, and the world to stand still.

She struggled to the window and threw open the sash; she wondered that she did not fall dead then and there.

The opened package on which her horrified eyes gazed, contained—the pin which had been torn from her father on the train during that sensational hold-up, and, twisted about it was a torn bit of the never-to-be-forgotten necktie that had caught and held her gaze on that occasion. As she held it in her shaking hand, a horrible query forced itself on her brain—who—was—the masked bandit! Had—she—married him? She reached her own apartment without encountering any of the servants; once there, she fell in a deep swoon among the blue hare-bells that adorned the velvet carpet.

She was just recovering as Daniel entered the room; he had returned for some important papers which he had forgotten. He sprang toward her with a cry of

alarm, exclaiming agonizedly, "Pauline, my darling wife, are you ill?"

As he uttered the words, he bent forward to raise her to her feet.

"Stop! do not touch me!" she screamed, cowering from him as she struggled to her feet. "If you laid your hand on me—it would kill me. *I know you now—for what you are!*—and—I abhor you. You deserve no pity at my hands, only scorn and the deepest—hatred. I will try and think out which way duty lies,—to send for my father and tell him all,—or—against right, and justice—hide my discovery—from the world—suffering in—silence!"

Daniel Weslow's arms dropped to his side; he was too utterly astonished for words; he gazed at her with dilated eyes, wondering if his young wife had suddenly lost her reason; surely that must be it. Tears sprang to his eyes; he held out his arms to her in an agony of emotion, saying huskily:—

"My darling, my love, let your husband comfort you; come to my arms, dear, and tell me what is the matter, what has so excited you—that you are in this state, sweetheart?"

The bitterest, most scornful laugh that was ever heard, fell from Pauline's lips. She drew herself up to her fullest height, gazing at him with blazing eyes, her voice choking with scorn as she answered:—

"Never presume to address me in those terms again! Henceforth we are strangers. If you would give me peace, rid me of your despised—presence." With these words she turned swiftly and entered an inner room,

closing the door after her. He heard the key turn in the lock.

Too thoroughly amazed for words, or action, Daniel stood staring at the door through which she had vanished,—stood like one turned to stone—for some minutes too dumbfounded to even think clearly.

At that moment the telephone rang; he answered it mechanically; he was wanted at the Senate; would he make haste to reach there with the papers he was to fetch.

With almost superhuman effort Daniel Weslow rallied from his agitation, thrust the papers in his pocket, and, after summoning the housekeeper to tell her his “wife was not feeling well, and bidding her look after her faithfully,” he left the house.

By the greatest of will-power, and nerves of steel, he got through the day but worry over Pauline seamed his face with many a new wrinkle.

For long hours Pauline had deliberated over the course she must pursue. She dared not tell her hot-headed old father of the terrible discovery she had made; she knew he held honor and honesty higher than anything else. He would not shelter from the world's scorn, a man whom he found to be living a double life, thief—and—high official. He would not brook it. If her father knew, it would mean a dreadful expose without an hour's delay, let the consequence be what it might, to Weslow.

There was a reason—why—she hesitated.

“I must think it out—by myself;—think what is best to be done;—in the meantime, “though under the

same roof, no strangers will be further apart than we," she ruminated, pacing excitedly up and down the room.

The line of conduct Pauline adopted caused Daniel the utmost dismay. She refused to be questioned concerning it. All he realized was, that without the slightest reason, her heart had changed toward him. He was, too, well aware that she had been indifferent to him when she had uttered the words which had made her his wife;—but by unending patience, and devoted love, he had been blind enough to believe he had at last won his way to her affections. This hope was now shattered.

Before guests, or strangers, Pauline was all that was bright, joyous, and a happy wife; the instant they were alone together, which never occurred if she could prevent it, she immediately froze into a veritable human icicle—ignoring his presence completely.

To Daniel, this sort of a life was intolerable, he determined it must cease at any cost, yet each day he idolized her more and more.

He threw himself heart and soul into his work. The Senator who came out of the west, was becoming a power. His opponents in senatorial battles soon discovered he was a foeman worthy of their steel. They told each other he was another Abraham Lincoln. His speeches got into print far and wide. He took up the rights of the common-people, and labored hard for them;—many a great corporation feared Senator Weslow—the—unapproachable. He was the friend of the poor and down-trodden.

Pauline read, and heard his praise, but her attitude toward him did not change. One thought was constantly in her mind:—

“Alas, that man can smile,—and,—smiling, be a—villain.”

Honors, aye, glory had come to Daniel Weslow,—yet, through it all, he was one of the most wretched, sorrowful, and in addition, the loneliest of men.—He had missed the one great thing that makes life worth living—*Love*.

The one woman on earth whose affection he craved,—would have given every drop of blood in his heart, to win,—spurned him aye, loathed him.

At this stage of affairs, Daniel learned, through hearing Pauline giving orders to the house-keeper, that Miss Marcelle Valteau was coming to pay her a visit of some weeks duration, and that the apartments opposite her own was to be made ready for her.

A ray of comfort came to him as he listened. Perhaps the clever French girl would soon notice how matters stood between Pauline and himself, and be the good angel of both, by patching up their differences. He hoped and prayed so.

Noon brought Marcelle, more beautiful than ever. Pauline marveled at the change in her, observing she was a veritable fashion-plate. She greeted Pauline effusively, in turn, Pauline flung her arms about her, saying wistfully:—“I am so glad you are come,—I am so lonesome.”

Lonesome! a bride, and lonesome! Marcelle caught at the words as a drowning person catches at a straw.

She took both of Pauline's hands in hers, gazing at her—fixedly.

“Dearie,—you have been crying!” she whispered, “you—are—unhappy!—is it not so?” There is nothing so yearned for, as some one to whom one can unburden one's self,—and be sure of sympathy.

The clever shaft struck home,—went directly to Pauline's sore heart; she burst into tears, hiding her head on Marcelle's shoulder.

“You are nursing a secret sorrow,” murmured Marcelle, drawing her to an adjacent sofa, and seating herself beside her, her arms still twined about Pauline. “Confide in me, dearie,—you are not happy with Daniel Weslow,—just as I feared.”

Pauline looked up through blinding tears into Marcelle's face.

“You are right,” she whispered chokingly, “Daniel and I are wretchedly at odds with each other;—we—do not speak—except—before strangers—I—I—cannot tell you—why.”

Marcelle's lips curled in a sneer behind her lace handkerchief; she knew she could worm the secret of their difference out of Pauline in a short time,—she was content for the present to learn they were on the verge of a violent quarrel. Marcelle decided it should take place without waste of time. She looked long and steadily at a portrait of Daniel over the mantel, a strange smile playing about her lips. It was well for Pauline that she could not follow the trend of Marcelle Valteau's thoughts. Suddenly she asked:—“Will Dan—Mr. Weslow join us at dinner, tonight?” Pauline nodded in the affirmative.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN A WOMAN FRIEND—PROVES FALSE

“What is home with none to meet—
None to welcome, none to greet us?
Home is sweet—and only sweet
Where there’s one we love to meet us.”

As Marcelle was to be their only dinner guest, Pauline did not take especial pains with her toilette, donning the first gown at hand;—a violet chiffon, without stopping to consider she had others which were still more becoming to her blonde loveliness.

Not so Marcelle; she selected her dinner gown with as much care as though she expected to meet some one who would be quite unable to resist her superb beauty. Her choice was a black lace that draped her perfect figure, and set off the creamy tint of her beautiful face, long, graceful neck, and exquisitely proportioned arms as nothing else could have done.

Her blue-black hair was pinned close to her shapely head. Her hands like lily leaves, with their pink palms, were not marred by even the smallest of jewels;—her only ornament being a splendid, glowing, American beauty rose which she wore at her belt.

Pauline looked at her in wonder, as she joined her in her boudoir.

“You look—superb Marcelle,” she exclaimed. “What a pity it is we will have no one at dinner to admire you;

your wonderful beauty ought not to be wasted on Daniel—and me. I must invite eligible gentlemen to meet you;—I must indeed; such charm shall not be wasted on desert air.”

“Oh no, please do not invite any one else;—a party of three is so cozy,—quite delightful;—I am sure to enjoy it so much more.”

Pauline looked at her in unfeigned astonishment, thinking, a girl of such rare beauty as was Marcelle's, was surely created to be admired.

Daniel was quite as much surprised as Pauline had been when his careless gaze fell upon Marcelle, in greeting.

Of late, dining alone together, when it was unavoidable, had become as irksome to him as it was to Pauline; on these occasions, utter, unbroken silence prevailed, both feeling relieved when the trial was over.

How amazingly different it was with Marcelle present. She was all life, wit, sparkle, merriment. She brought the first laugh to Daniel's lips that he had known since the day following the inaugural ball.

Very adroitly Pauline was drawn into the liveliness prevailing, until as Daniel thought, she was once more like her old self, the Pauline he had wedded and adored. He thanked Heaven Marcelle had come; she might be able to establish peace between his young wife and himself. He caught at the hope as a drowning man catches at a straw. Pauline never breakfasted with him, taking her chocolate in her boudoir. To his surprise Daniel found Marcelle at the breakfast table, looking marvelously beautiful in a simple mauve breakfast frock, and

more vivacious, if that were possible, than she had been the night before. The fortnight which followed, passed very quickly, and enjoyably to Marcelle. She noted she had awakened the interest, nay, the admiration of Daniel Weslow; she was satisfied with that beginning. Marcelle enthused over both the opera and the theatre. Pauline refused to go with him when Daniel suggested engaging a box for these occasions, but suggested he take Marcelle; he could not well refuse, with Marcelle's eager dark eyes looking delightedly up at him.

Pauline's request was law to him, Daniel smothered the sigh that rose to his lips, and agreed to take her friend at her bidding.

The most beautiful women in the world are to be found in Washington at the beginning of the season; Daniel was indeed much surprised to observe that the beautiful French girl whom he accompanied, outshone them all.

It amused Daniel, somewhat, to note that the glances of most of the men in that vast, brilliant assemblage, returned again and again, at length becoming firmly fixed upon Miss Valleau, his beautiful companion. He felt sure many of them would be coming to him later, hoping for an introduction. On the following day, this proved to be the case. He spoke to Marcelle, concerning her pleasure in the matter, and was much astonished when she declined to meet the gentlemen, any one of which would have been a most desirable party, measured by Washington requirements.

“No! no! no! Not on this occasion, please Mr. Weslow,—perhaps some other time,” she murmured pret-

tily. "I am here to visit just Pauline and yourself on this occasion; we will have just a little homey visit together, the three of us,—that will make me happier than anything else."

Pauline refused to go to the senate, even when Daniel had a most important bill at issue. Looking about the vast throng, Daniel was sure to see Marcelle's face, and note her encouraging smile.

Washington has known many a scandal, but none more relished than the story which was at first hinted at, than referred to more openly, than the remark that the "honest" senator from the far west was at odds with his beautiful young wife,—and all because of a stunning brunette—a French girl, who was seen accompanying him everywhere. Society shrugged its shoulders, complaisantly awaiting the climax.

Daniel Weslow had not the slightest idea of the sensation he was creating by obeying Pauline's behest to escort her guest hither and thither. Heretofore, Marcelle had never failed to charm every man who came within the radius of her charms, she felt piqued, angered that this man, whom the baby-faced Pauline had won, seemed so impregnable to her fascinations.

The servants of the household soon noticed how very interested the beautiful French girl was in Senator Weslow, and talked it over among themselves, wishing they dared give their young mistress an inkling of the treacherous friend in whom she reposed such confidence.

One day, returning from a walk through the park, Marcelle seemed very much excited. "When we are

alone, I will tell you whom I ran across," she whispered in Pauline's ear. Shortly after, the two were closeted together in Pauline's boudoir.

"Prepare for a surprise, but do not be upset, dear," murmured Marcelle, drawing Pauline to a sofa, and putting her arms about her, "It was—Mr.—Hugh—Boyd."

A gasp fell from Pauline's lips, a swift pallor spread over her cheeks, and Marcelle could feel the slight form tremble in her clasp.

"I—did—not—know—you had ever—met him," faltered Pauline.

"I did not mention before for it was useless,—that I met him the day you married Mr. Weslow. You remember I was waiting in the drawing room for you to return with some French books you had gone to your father's office for,—and, it seems, Mr. Boyd had an appointment to meet you. When you did not appear, and after waiting a long time,—he came to the house to inquire for you. In the semi-twilight, he mistook me for you, and in the broken love words he uttered, I discovered his secret, and yours,—your love for each other, and why he was there,—to beg you to elope with him.

When you returned to the house, the bride of another, I determined to keep Mr. Boyd's coming to your home, and the object of it, a secret even from—you. There was little use in opening—an old wound."

"I was to meet Hughey,—but—we never spoke of—eloping," sobbed the wretched Pauline, hiding her face on Marcelle's shoulder.

“He told me he was to suggest it when you met,” answered Marcelle. “But,—that is past and gone;—now for the present. I would never have known him if he had not stopped, called my name, telling me whom he was. Oh such a marvelous change as I beheld in him. He was so bright and so bonny then, now,—years of the bitterest sorrow passing over him could not have changed him more. The loss of you has broken the man’s heart, dear.”

“Do not say that!” exclaimed Pauline distressedly, “I cannot bear it.”

“I am only telling you, warning you what you might expect to see, if you chanced to come face to face with the poor fellow,” murmured Marcelle.

“It is not probable that we shall ever meet again,” responded Pauline huskily. “I have put him out of my thoughts, out of my life.”

“And yet you two loved each other so fondly once,” mused Marcelle. “We must not talk of him, I am striving even yet—to forget,” faltered Pauline in a voice freighted with sobs.

“Never again after this once,” agreed Marcelle, “But I feel quite in duty bound to tell you all that transpired. When he saw me, he jumped to the conclusion that I was here on a visit to you. I replied I was.

“‘Tell me,’ he cried, catching my hand, ‘Is Pauline—happy? I have—haunted the street where she lives just to catch one glimpse of that face dearer to me even yet, than the living, beating heart in my bosom. Oh, tell me—be kind to me, Miss Valteau, answer me truthfully,—has the man who stole my treasure from me,—

made my darling—happy? Has she so far forgotten me as to be happy with another? Oh God! the thought of it has almost unseated my reason. Love for her has consumed me; I cannot live without her, I want to look on her face just one little moment,—then it does not matter what happens to me after that.’ ”

Pauline was sobbing bitterly; after a few moments she raised her face to Marcelle’s whispering faintly:—
“He seemed to give me up—easily enough,—making no attempt to see me nor write. . . .”

Marcelle interrupted her quickly. “He said that he did write, entrusting his letters to a friend to be delivered to you—providing you would receive them,—but that they were always returned to him—unopened. When he heard you had come east, he said he made up his mind to see you,—hear your voice, touch your hand if but for a moment,—then go out of your life—forever. Oh, Pauline dear! I have never beheld such a mighty, unconquerable love! He was a man utterly crushed, down and out. Love for you—has killed him.”

Pauline was sobbing afresh. “I am sorry you told me, Marcelle, you must help me to—forget him.”

“He bade me give you this message, dear, he begged me to plead with you to see him just one little moment dear, then—he will go away.”

“No! no! no! I cannot see him,” cried Pauline distressedly, “I must not! It is best for both of us that the whole wide world should lie between us.”

“Confide in me, dear,” murmured Marcelle. “Is he not your first—and—only love? Girls like you, noble and wonderful, love once, never again!”

"I am so wretched I cannot talk of it," sobbed Pauline.

"But you will consent to see him—just once,—I promised to let him know—I could not break away from him until I had given him the solemn promise that I would phone him as to your decision."

"Oh, Marcelle, I must not meet him ever again, remember, I am the wife of another,—a wife, now, Marcelle. It would not be right. I had—no heart to give the man—I married, but he has a claim upon my honor,—and the duty I owe him. Daniel would not consent to it."

Marcelle laughed aloud. "Surely you were not for a moment, contemplating telling Daniel Weslow anything about it, I hope!"

"It would be proper to acquaint my husband of Hughey's,—I—I mean Mr. Boyd's request, would it not?" queried Pauline anxiously.

"Certainly not," responded the French girl promptly. "You have broken Hugh Boyd's heart, ruined his life by your desertion of him, for a man who has wealth,—if he craves just one kind word from you, it seems—inhuman to me, that you would not speak that one word."

"I want to do whatever is just—right—and best!" sobbed Pauline wringing her hands and sobbing bitterly on Marcelle's shoulder. "You are older and wiser than I, and my true friend, advise me what to do Marcelle."

"If you take my advice you will see poor Hugh," replied Marcelle. "Of course no one must know. I can arrange it for you so that no one will be the wiser.

You will always feel happier for giving the man who has loved you so hopelessly, one crumb of comfort, to lighten the burden of his despair—which must gnaw away at his heart—while his life lasts.”

“Oh, Marcelle, how can I invite him here—to Daniel’s home!” cried Pauline despairingly, “I—I—could not.”

“Well, hardly!” commented Marcelle, “I have just thought of another plan to suggest to you—which seems entirely feasible:—

“He is now devoting his life to charitable purposes,—procuring little strips of land here and there, to be deeded over to the children of the poor; I heard you speaking of some land you owned out in Oklahoma, and thought you might be glad to donate it for the poor sick babies,—To put this in Mr. Boyd’s hands to accomplish, would be mighty good of you.”

“I would be glad to do that, Marcelle,” Pauline responded quickly, drying her eyes, “would I have to go to a lawyer’s office, meeting him there? I—I—would prefer not to meet him—alone.”

“A lawyer’s office! why, that would never do,” declared Marcelle promptly. “Here’s a better way, just hear me through before you comment, or object.—It’s a little romantic, to be sure, but barring that, it’s quite all right.—There’s to be a French masked ball given at——street. A very high-toned affair I am assured, as all the highest French officials will be present. You could go, masked; Mr. Boyd would be there, sign the deed he would bring with him,—the notary he would bring with him to attest to your signature. In those few moments he would have seen you, heard your voice, touched your

hand—and then he would be satisfied to go away. In fact, this is the line of procedure he himself proposed,—and I told him I was almost sure this would meet with your approval. Tickets were sent me some days ago. You will have time to consider it. Remember, you would be doing a gracious act in giving that strip of land which is useless, for so worthy a cause. The rich can have acres of ground around their homes—but the poor have not a spot to which they can go to get a breath of the pure sweet air of Heaven. I am sure Mr. Weslow will be in hearty accord with this, even though he did not know of it at the time.”

“My—husband—would be glad for me to do as you are suggesting; when he gave me that land he spoke of that very thing,” declared Pauline.

“Then, may I tell Mr. Boyd—you will meet him there,—if only for a brief moment or so?” Marcelle queried.

“Yes, I will go,” answered Pauline, wiping her eyes.

“That’s fine!” exclaimed Marcelle exuberantly.

A few moments later Marcelle was on her way to the nearest public phone to call up Boyd. She would not trust the phone in her room for fear some one in the house might be listening in. What she had to say to Boyd was important.

In a cheap hostelry in the worst, and most obscure part of Washington, Hugh Boyd, was pacing up and down awaiting Marcelle’s message with the greatest of impatience. Reardon, who had come on to Washington, sat by the window smoking.

The phone bell rang; Boyd was at the instrument with a bound, jerking down the receiver.

“It’s all right,” came Marcelle’s voice cautiously. “I’ll see that a certain party will be at the French Hall at ten o’clock on the evening of the 22nd. Get your papers ready; SHE WILL SIGN.”

CHAPTER XIV

IF THE HEART HARBORS DOUBTS AND FEARS

“Where ye are liberal with your loves and counsels,
Be sure you are not loose; for those ye make friends
And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
Like water from ye, never found again,
But where they mean to sink ye.”

DURING the fortnight Marcelle had been an inmate of Daniel Weslow's home she had left no stone unturned to make her presence there a cause of joy to him. They had long and earnest chats over the breakfast coffee, and her's was the only welcoming smile he received when he put in an appearance at dinner. He was becoming used to Pauline's averted face, and coldness of manner, though he did hope their guest would not notice it.

Immediately after dinner, it was the custom of Pauline and Marcelle to repair to the library. If he put in an appearance, Pauline soon found an excuse to leave the room. Not so, Marcelle; she was sure to remain; always doing her best to make the evening pass pleasantly for him, which won for her his sincere gratitude.

He had been drawn into joining several clubs, but he never went near any one of them? To Daniel Weslow,

there was no place like home, even though there was a note of discord in it. On one of these occasions, he looked up from his paper to observe Marcelle looking at him fixedly.

She blushed confusedly. "May I speak to you a moment, senator?" she asked.

"Certainly, Miss Vallean," he answered promptly.

"I—I—was just wondering if my visit was not ill-timed sir!" she murmured, looking at him appealingly. "Would it not be best for me to take my departure?" Daniel laid down his paper, shaking his head.

"Your presence here is more a comfort to me than you imagine," he returned; that was all he dared to trust himself to say. The deep sigh that broke from his lips brought Marcelle to his side.

"Oh, if I could but help you, if you are in grief, sir," she murmured.

Glancing up, he saw tears in her dark eyes. In that moment it seemed to him that he must have some one to confide in, or the heart in his bosom would burst. Perhaps she could help him. She was a woman, and Pauline's friend—she liked her well, she would have influence with her.

"I would be so glad of your—advice, Miss Vallean, I *am* in grief—I think you could help me." He motioned her to a seat opposite him.

For some moments he was silent; then, in a shaking voice, he said:—

"During the time you have been here with us, I think you must have noticed that there is an—estrangement between Mrs. Weslow and myself." He

looked at her wistfully. Marcelle nodded. "There never was a case like this in all the whole wide world. I assume you know the story from Pauline of our unusual—courtship,—and—our marriage," he went on with evident embarrassment. Marcelle bowed her head in assent. "Then there is no need for me to go over that,—except to add,—I thought at the time I wedded my wife, that I—rough and uncouth though I was,—had won her love;—I soon found out that she was so utterly dissatisfied with me, her feelings generated into actual dislike,—and from that stage into intense—hatred; yes,—hatred, Miss Vallean. I have done everything in God's world that a man could do to make her happy, but have failed—utterly, as you see. I am fearful as to how it is to end. I love my wife so much that I would lay down my life for her. I cannot fathom what I have—or have not done,—which has caused her to become so bitter toward me. You would render me a favor, make me your debtor while I live, if you could only find out from her just what her grievance toward me is,—that I might do everything in my power to rectify it. You are a young lady of intelligence, and sound judgment;—will you tell me what you think is the reason for my wife's aversion to me?—I—cannot stand this sort of a thing much longer; it is eating like a canker into my heart."

"You say, you discovered, after marriage, that your wife had no love for you," pursued Marcelle thoughtfully.

"That is the case," he admitted regretfully. "Matters are going from bad to worse; I am terrified by the

constant thought she is thinking of leaving me. Our estrangement will soon become public gossip."

"You can think of no reason whatever for having brought this state of affairs between you,—about?" she queried.

"None whatever," he repeated earnestly.

"No wife ever turned against her husband—without a cause," declared Marcelle, inquiring in the next breath:—"Did Pauline ever have a love affair, young though she was,—before she met you?"

She saw Daniel Weslow give a great start, clutch the arms of his chair in a tight grip. It was fully a moment ere he answered—"Yes"—adding quickly:—"It was only a girlish fancy on her part; she was thrown in contact with a scoundrel,—a black-guard. His good-looks was a passport to favor. He was soon shown up in his true colors. The shock must have been great to her; but she forgot him, I feel sure."

Marcelle rose slowly, saying:—"I hope you will pardon me if I err in my judgment,—but,—I think you have struck at the root of the trouble,—an old-lover. I am a woman, and I know what I am talking about, Mr. Weslow;—a woman seldom, or never forgets an old lover, her first lover . . . All of a sudden memory may recall him;—she yearns for him, and, with thinking, and yearning, her heart's love goes back to him. She grows to detest any one who stands between them."

Daniel Weslow rose to his feet, his face pale as death, his features working convulsively. An ominous silence fell between them.

“Remember, it is only my opinion, Mr. Weslow;—time will decide whether I am right—or wrong. You must await further developments ere you—decide—my opinion was correct.”

His head dropped on his breast; after a moment he raised it.

“In the meantime, will you do all in your power to lift the cloud between my wife and me?” he asked in a voice choked with emotion.

“I have already tried to do so, but thus far, have failed ignominiously,” was her astonishing reply, as she turned away, with a low, tremulous—“Good night, sir.”

The door closed after her,—and he was alone with his harrassing thoughts. “An old lover in the background!” he muttered clenching his hands tightly together. “Can it be Pauline still gives a thought to Boyd, thief, scoundrel that he is,—and I—loving her so madly. Surely God would not be so cruel to me as to let that happen.”

He thought of how kind Miss Valteau was in endeavoring to soften the blow for him;—though she was obliged to speak the truth; open his eyes to the true state of affairs.

Only that morning he had fancied he saw Boyd passing him in a crowd. By the time he had wheeled about, the shabby fellow had vanished as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him.

“I must have been mistaken,” he ruminated, and passed on.

Now he fell to wondering if the fellow was indeed

Boyd. His first thought was to call up the police who were still searching for their man, and acquaint them of his suspicions. He concluded to do a little investigation on his own account first.

Despite all the glory that goes with being a Senator, as he sat there Daniel Weslow was the most unhappy man in all Washington. The thought that he might possibly have a rival for his Pauline's love was maddening. He wished he had never brought her east. His crown of glory was full of thorns—that reached down to his heart.

In her boudoir, Pauline was tossing restlessly to and fro on her pillow. She could not sleep, thinking of the amazing disclosure Marcelle had made concerning Hugh Boyd. Was it possible she had really wrecked his life—that he had loved, and mourned her as much as that! How she pitied him; her heart ached for him. Would it be cruel to him to refuse to see him? Marcelle had told her it was but a simple kindness to go to him; and that after seeing her, he would go away—never to cross her path or behold her again. He was yearning so pitifully to see her for just one little moment Marcelle had said, in pleading his cause with her.—She had also hinted that the deed to the wild strip of ground in the far west which Hughey would ask her to sign for the benefit of the poor, as their playground,—was in reality the only valid excuse he could think of for bringing her into his presence, and he had seized upon it.

Pauline wiped the tears from her eyes, resolving the poor children of Oklahoma City should have the strip

of ground;—that signed over to them, she would hold out her hand to Hughey, and say—Farewell,—uttering **no other word**. She would be brave, turning instantly, and leaving him. She thought of the lines:—

“It is best to leave you thus dear,
Best for you,—and, best—for—me.”

In her apartment across the corridor, Marcelle Val-leau was pacing up and down the room in a tumult of excitement.

“She will go,” she muttered with a harsh laugh, “I imagined when she learned that the meeting place designated was—the French masked ball, she would balk at once, refusing outright;—the word—masked,—caught her. She felt she would be able to conceal her face, and no one would ever know of it—she is more simple than I took her to be; it seems.”

In his room in the cheap lodging house, Boyd and Reardon were discussing the matter with gusto—though the hour was long past midnight.

“This Valteau girl you speak of, is certainly a trump to influence the Senator’s young wife to take a fool-hardy step of that kind; ten to one, when she has time to think it over, she will wish to appoint some other place,—any other place than a masked ball.”

“Marcelle Valteau will hold her up to her promise, never fear,” returned Boyd. “This, together with her secret longing to see me again, will fetch her.”

“Now let us come to a full understanding in this matter,” said Reardon. “I want to know just what I am to get out of it;—I am a dangerous man to at-

tempt to double-cross, you understand? What's my share in this deal?"

For a full minute Boyd looked at him fixedly. Reardon took note of this.

"We have fixed up two papers for her to sign, haven't we?" queried Boyd. Reardon nodded. Boyd went on slowly:—"One is a deed for her western property,—the whole of it,—and the other—the divorce paper you fixed up to be your trump card, Reardon, in taking a most stupendous revenge upon Daniel Weslow for being the means of getting you disbarred for a time, from law-practice. That ought to suffice you, as being your share in this affair."

"Satisfied revenge will not keep me eating!" retorted Reardon, "besides that, I want an equal division between you and me, of the property that you will wheedle her into signing over. Understand that fully, Boyd."

"We cannot afford to quarrel, no matter how hard you squeeze me when you find me in a tight place; I might have expected that from you, Reardon."

The other made no retort. He was satisfied with the decision.

"You are sure everything is drawn up right?" asked Boyd anxiously.

"It is my business to know how to draw papers correctly," frowned Reardon; adding:—"That my name might not appear in either paper, I secured the services of a brother attorney here, a poor devil who is almost down and out—but as clever as he is poverty-stricken. He will have a notary there to acknowledge

her signature,—and he will see to it that the papers are filed the first thing the following morning,—which will cap the climax of this double deal.”

The clock in an adjoining belfry struck four.

“Morning!” commented Boyd, yawning. Without another word they turned in,—flinging themselves on the two bunks which served for beds in the room, and were soon sleeping as good a sleep as honest men enjoy, rogues though they were.

The paleness of Pauline’s face showed Marcelle, the next morning, that she had not rested well. The moment they were alone she went up to Marcelle, whispering:—“Are you quite sure dear, it is right for me to go to see Hughey,—at the place—he requests? I think I will ask him to come here.”

“It is too late to change the place of meeting now,” returned Marcelle. “He phoned me before you were up, to learn your decision, and I assured him I had instructions from you that you would not disappoint him, you would be there. He is to leave the city on the midnight train. He is going to India, or some other far off place very shortly—as soon as he can arrange his affairs in New York. Poor fellow, I pity him with all my heart. I—I—think he is praying to die—and end it all. It is really a deed of mercy, dear Pauline, that you have consented to give him one ray of sunshine to pierce the gloom of his dark and dreary life. It was so good of you.”

Pauline had watched the dawn break with a very troubled heart beating in her bosom. Despite Marcelle’s assurance that her action in going to the French

ball was quite all right under the circumstances, she felt unhappy over it.

She had loved Hugh Boyd with all the guileless love of an innocent girlish heart. Fate, over which she had had no control, had parted them just as surely as though one of them lay in the grave. She was now the wife of Daniel Weslow.—No matter whom or what he was,—or what she had found out about him—which had killed her respect at one blow,—she was still bound to him—by shackles which would grip, and hold her the rest of her life. Her past, with that sweet girlish love,—and Hughey,—belonged to the years that were gone. She must take up the cross of her hapless married life, and bear it to the end.

Noon came,—the hours of the afternoon speeded swiftly by, and the shadows of night slowly gathered over the city. Daniel brought a friend home to dinner. Marcelle was at her brilliant best,—fairly radiant.—Pauline alone seemed distraught;—only Daniel noticed it.

After dinner the gentlemen went to the library. Marcelle followed Pauline to her boudoir to get her dressed and off.

“I sent out for a costume, and was fortunate enough to secure the sweetest thing you ever saw; I’ll bring it right in to you.” She ran off to her room reappearing with a creation in white gauze flung over her arm.

“Why, it’s a ballet costume!” dismayed Pauline.

“The most beautiful thing they had,—in fact the only one they had left,” announced Marcelle coolly. Hobson’s choice, therefore, you must wear it.—You

ought to be glad that the man who adores you, and who is to see you for the last time, will behold you looking like a fairy, a veritable dream of loveliness that will live in his memory—ever after.”

The—short—skirt!” gasped Pauline in consternation. “Oh, Marcelle! I—I—could not appear in it, believe me dear.”

“You can indeed, and you **MUST**,” declared Marcelle, hustling her into the abbreviated skirts.—You have never been to a French Masked ball. Let me tell you every one of the young ladies who will be there, will be wearing just this sort of a costume, I assure you, therefore, you will not be noticed;—you would raise no end of conjecture as to your identity, if you wore anything else.”

Against her better judgment Pauline yielded to the stronger will of Marcelle.

“You are to meet him at ten;—that is the hour it begins;—it wants just twenty minutes to that time now. The taxi I engaged is waiting across the way.”

CHAPTER XV

WHEN JUDGEMENT SAYS—NO!

“Love enthralls us until we love the chain
And Beauty’s smile is worth a miser’s gain;
Then hope is better than reality
And faith as boundless as the boundless sea.”

WHILE Pauline was still protesting she ought not to go to the French ball, Marcelle wrapped her own long, dark, enveloping cloak about her, hustled her down to the main hall without being observed by any of the servants, and out of the door into the waiting cab.

“A young man will be watching and waiting for you,” whispered Marcelle, “he knows this cab, its chauffeur, and number, he will make no mistake; he will conduct you to where Hugh is standing, without a moment’s loss of time. Put on this little silken mask just before you leave the taxi.”

With these parting instructions, Marcelle closed the door with a bang, and the next instant Pauline, who was trembling like a leaf, was being whirled through the streets at a rapid pace to her destination.

“Oh, why did I allow Marcelle to persuade me into coming—when my—better judgment says—No!” she faltered. Twice she rapped on the glass pane to attract the chauffeur’s attention, and order him to turn back,—apparently he did not hear, and redoubled his speed.

A few moments later the taxi turned into a side street, stopping at length before a lighted building into

which merry crowds of men and young girls were making their way.

Before Pauline had time to think, the door was opened by a very polite man who whispered, rather than asked, aloud:—"The lady Mr. Boyd was expecting?"

Pauline adjusted the bit of lace and silk over her face, nodding in the affirmative.

"Will you discard your cloak,—or retain it?" he asked.

"I will keep it on, please, as I shall be here but a few moments."

He bowed respectfully, conducting her to the farthest end of the room, to a small booth, separated from the ball-room by draped French and American flags intertwined. In an instant Boyd was at her side, his hands clasping both of hers. His dark eyes looking down into her own with their old-time magic spell.

"Oh, Pauline!—forgive me, I cannot call you anything else—it was so good of you to come. Heaven has indeed answered my prayer—I am at a loss—that is,—I cannot find words in which to thank you."

By a tremendous effort Pauline gained something like composure. She drew her hands from his clinging clasp, answering:—"The noble object in which you are interesting yourself,—trying to bring relief into the lives of the suffering children of the poor, by obtaining play-grounds for them, ere the heat of the coming summer is upon them,—is sufficient—reason—as to—why I—am here—to do my share—to aid you—in—the noble work you have undertaken,—Mr.—Boyd."

He was a master hand at acting; Belasco missed the chance of his life in not securing Hugh Boyd. Instantly he caused a rush of tears to fill his eyes, rolling down his cheeks. "Would it be amiss if I asked you to call me—Hughey, as you once did in those old, sweet times?" he murmured. "Just—once,—I am hungering so to hear it on your lips."

She tried to utter the name, when she saw those tears, but it stuck in her throat. He noted her evident confusion.

"If you will take this seat, with your back to the curtain, you could remove your mask;—You will do this, Pauline; I ask it—not as a request—but—a prayer to you,—that I may look on your face, the dearest the world ever held for me—or will hold, while my life lasts."

There was a tiny table in the booth,—she took off the mask and laid it down upon it,—She did not look up to meet his gaze which she knew was fixed with a burning intensity upon her;—she could hear his deep drawn sighs—and she was sorrier than ever that she had come.

"I thank you more than words can express," he whispered hoarsely, brokenly.

She was frightened at the mood in which she found him. What if he should attempt to take her in his arms, and kiss her, as he had done many a time before—when they were betrothed lovers,—all forgetful of the gulf which separated them now. Somehow, she could not tell just why, or in what way,—but this man, standing before her, in appearance slightly disheveled, and clothes a bit shabby, seemed strangely at variance with

the natty, immaculate Hugh Boyd who had caught and held her girlish fancy in those other days.

“More beautiful than ever!” he ejaculated, gazing like one entranced at her flushed, averted face, “and to think—a clown—has come between us!”

In a moment Pauline was on her feet. No matter what she knew, secretly about Daniel Weslow, he was her husband; she was in duty bound not to allow any one to traduce, or speak lightly of him in her presence.

“Stop!” she exclaimed in a clear, ringing voice. “You are forgetting you are addressing your remark—to—Daniel Weslow’s—WIFE!”

“Ah—ha!” he sneered with a boisterous laugh. “It seems that he has caught your heart in the rebound; I might have known better than to pin my hopes to the belief any woman can be constant;—it’s always the man who is on the ground—who has the show, and wins out;—and you are the girl who vowed, leaning against my heart, that you would love me to the hour of your death—”

She interrupted him quickly. “I am here, to give, through you, that small bit of ground, to the poor children of Oklahoma City,” she announced gravely. “I think the quicker we transact the arrangement,—the better,—that I may take my departure.”

“As you will, Pauline,” he responded, adding:—“I humbly beg a thousand pardons if I have said anything that offends you in any way;—through it all, bear in mind my emotion is almost uncontrollable—because I realize I am looking upon you for the last time, you

who have been next to my God in my heart, my idol. All that made life worth living, to me.”

She was deeply touched by both his words and manner; for one brief wild moment the thought came to her to hold out her hands to him crying out that she was more unhappy than he;—that her marriage had been a cruel mistake,—and what she had found out about the man whom she had wedded—concerning the articles his pockets had yielded. But the next instant—came a reaction—with a sudden thought which forced itself to her mind.

She turned from him white and silent; he saw her tremble, then, gain her self possession by a great effort. He feared she was about to swoon, and made up his mind he must make haste to get those papers signed ere anything like that should happen—and upset his plans.

He drew two papers from his breast pocket and laid them down before her saying: “This one is the deed for the strip of land—for you to sign,—and this other document—accompanies it on record.”

Mechanically Pauline took up both papers and read them through. He had had a wager with Reardon—that she would not take the trouble to read them over, but would sign without doing so. Reardon had declared she WOULD look over them, and had prepared them accordingly.

Boyd took his fountain pen from his pocket.

“Where do I sign?” she asked, taking it from his hand.

“One moment, Pauline,” he remarked, “I will call a

young man, a notary who will be needed;—that is he, looking this way, expectantly.”

Pauline followed the direction he indicated, observing a man approaching.

Once again, while her attention was for an instant diverted, Hugh Boyd proved that he was still master of the art of legerdemain, by instantaneously thrusting the two papers she had examined under his coattail, *substituting two similar looking documents* which he did not intend she should examine. In answer to Boyd’s nod, the man entered the booth.

“You will sign there,” said Boyd, indicating a dotted line. He fairly held his breath until she had complied. —“And on the other paper,—there.”

Again Pauline wrote her name where he directed. The notary took her acknowledgement, placing his seal which he had brought with him upon the documents, handing them to Boyd, remarking, he would meet him at the recorder’s office, the next morning, quite as soon as it was open.

Bowing, he took his leave of them.

With the two signed documents safe and snug in his breast pocket, Boyd could have shouted in his exuberance. He recollected just in time that it would never do;—He and Reardon could shout and celebrate—later.

“Now I will say good bye—and return to my home,” said Pauline, rising—as she spoke, she felt the folds of the cloak which she had been grasping tightly, slip through her fingers;—the next instant it lay at her feet.

Boyd stared at her with a low whistle.

“In costume—by all that is wonderful!—and such a

costume!” he ejaculated—a ballet-dancer. Ye gods!—you have come for a dance with me; you have yearned to be in my arms again, our hearts throbbing madly against each other! You love me yet, you beautiful darling! The dance music has just struck up, we will join the mad merry crowd,—have our fill of the joy of being together again,—you and I who still love each other so madly!”

He grasped her arm but she wrenched herself free from him.

“No, no! I will not dance,—as you well know I am not here for that purpose—please escort me to the door and call a taxi for me.”

“You are here, and you shall enjoy the evening with me,” he declared boisterously. “Do you think I am a stick, or a stone, with you so near me—to coolly let you go so soon! By George, no!”

Pauline looked at him with dilated eyes. All in an instant she was losing her illusions concerning Hugh, and the consuming love for her which Marcelle had painted so adroitly, arousing all her pity.

She thought in that moment of her father’s words:—“Boyd is a—scoundrel—as you will find out some day;—I would rather see you dead, my daughter, than wedded to that poltroon who has no respect for virtue.”

Both Mrs. Holt and all the servants in her old home were against him—even Daniel Weslow had said:—“I have come to the conclusion that our marriage was God’s wise purpose in taking you away from that villain, Hugh Boyd. He is all that is bad, Pauline, without one redeeming virtue,—His reputation is of the worst; there

is no crime of which he is not capable. It is not in him to care for a good woman."

She turned and looked at Boyd. His face was flushed with excitement—his manner toward her had suddenly turned from respectful to domineering,—nay, almost—insulting.

She repeated her request to be escorted to a taxi.

"Not just yet, my beautiful, imperious Pauline," he repeated. "You are going to dance with me, not once, but a dozen times. I'll warrant there will not be a man in the room who will not be envying me clasping to my bosom so enchanting a creature, a fairy in gauze. Your friend Marcelle knew quite well it would inflame my fancy—to see you—like that!"

"I have always had the utmost respect for you up to this moment," cried Pauline, her voice ringing with scorn. "Now—you have changed it to the utmost—contempt. I—I—have changed my mind about permitting you to be the custodian of those papers, you will hand them back to me, sir."

He laughed the most blood-curdling laugh that ever fell from human lips. "Forget about it," he sneered, dropping his mask of politeness, and pretended affection.—"You left me flat—that other time, tit for tat is fair play, my haughty beauty. I told you then—in those other days, I was not the man to be thrown down by a woman, and if you attempted it, it would be playing with a two edge sword. Now you shall—"

Pauline turned from him white with rage and insulted pride.

"I have requested of you to escort me to a taxi—now,

I shall not permit you to do so.—I shall go myself,—If you attempt to detain me, I shall cry for assistance. Surely there are gentlemen out there who will rush to aid a lady in distress.”

He laughed at her scornfully. “There is not a man out there who would interfere,” he announced, adding, “No LADY would be expected to be in this place. They would soon subdue your idea of shouting out;—they do not want the place pulled on account of any woman’s fool notion. I am well known here; one word from me, and the Jazz band would drown any fool shrieks you might be attempting to get away with.”

Pauline was becoming frantic,—hysterical with terror. “I—I humble myself to appeal to you,” she sobbed. “If there is one spark of honor, of—gentlemanly chivalry left within you, I plead to you to get me out of this place. I—I—shall die if I am forced to remain here a moment longer; I ask of you, for the last time, Hugh Boyd, will you get me away from here.”

“On one condition,” he replied, and that is, that you dance with me—without attempting to make any fuss, or scene about it. Seeing you in that abbreviated costume fires my ambition to dance with you. If you are wise you will consent.”

“My—husband will make you answer to him for this affront to me, sir,” she panted, bursting into tears.

“Threats do not frighten me,” he returned. “I do not look past the present to see what is likely to happen to me in the future.”

“If I refuse to dance with you?” she queried, choking back her sobs.

“You shall sit right there in that chair, until you see the wisdom of changing your mind,” he declared. “To dance with me is not such a horrible thing to contemplate. I know a score of beauties who would ask no greater delight than to dance with me, I assure you.”

Pauline did not answer, her brain was in a whirl; she was trying to decide what was best to do under the pitiable circumstances. This was Hugh Boyd’s manner of revenging himself upon her. In that moment she thanked her God that she had been prevented from marrying the villain who now stood unmasked of his true character before her.

She realized he would keep his word, force her to remain until she did dance with him. She concluded it might be best to comply,—get it over as soon as possible. That would appease him, and she could get away.

He looked at her fixedly, reading all that was passing through her mind—but she was far and away from knowing what was passing through his mind. She turned and faced him, raising her head proudly, with the haughty gesture he remembered so well.

“I will dance with you—it being the price you set—upon seeing me out of this place,—but it is not of my free will I do so.”

“You do well to be so sensible—at last,” he commented. At that moment the music struck up with a deafening crash. Boyd caught her in his arms, and the next instant she was being whirled along into the thick of the boisterous crowd—Boyd’s arms about her, crushing her in a close embrace.

CHAPTER XVI

LOST! A HUSBAND'S CONFIDENCE

“We find ourselves in wild despair
Midst scattered broken treasures.
All is wrecked which promised once so fair;
We stop ourselves with sorrow's two edged knife,
And yet—A little patience strengthens life.”

ALL unmindful of the event which meant so much to him which was transpiring elsewhere, Daniel Weslow and his visitor talked long and earnestly in his library over a very important bill which was to be brought before the senate the following day.

The chiming of the great clock in the corridor without, announcing the hour of ten, brought the guest to his feet, apologizing for having remained so long. After taking leave of him, Daniel returned to the library to muse long, and carefully over all his brother Senator had said.

There was a light tap on the door,—in answer to his “come in,” a servant entered, bearing a special delivery letter for him. Since he had been a Senator, in Washington, he had been deluged with mail of that kind. This differed from the rest by bearing the words in the lower left-hand corner:—“Open quickly, you have not a moment to lose.”

Daniel smiled, and it was the last smile that was to come to his lips for long years. Methodically, and mechanically he opened it with his paper cutter, run-

ning his eyes carelessly over the first few words. What he read sent the blood from his face, and caused his heart to stop beating as though the icy hand of death were gripping it. There were but a few lines, which read as follows:—

“Senator Weslow:—If you would save yourself from a sensational expose,—and also your wife, go quickly to . . . Street—where a French mask-ball is in progress. Your wife is there, in a costume which only the women who attend that particular place, would have the hardihood to wear. As I write this, she is on the floor, dancing with a man whom I hear bears the worst of reputations, and learn his name is Hugh Boyd. To avoid one of the worst scandals Washington has ever been so near to getting hold of,—get your wife away with all haste; I hear, too, from unquestionable authority,—the place is to be pulled at 10.30.

“(Signed) A Friend.”

With hands that trembled like aspen leaves, Daniel consulted his watch; the hands pointed to 10.05. Seizing his hat and coat he dashed out of the house. Hailing a passing taxi on which he saw the sign, “For Hire,” he sprang in giving his destination in a thick, unsteady voice, promising the chauffeur thrice the usual fare if he got him there quickly.

“We generally make it a thirty minutes drive, but if you will do as you say sir, I’ll cut through the back streets and alleys, landing you there in five. Fumbling in his pocket Daniel drew forth from his pocket a bill,

thrusting it into the fellow's hand without looking at it.

"Wait for me,—you shall have double that sum," he said, springing out of the taxi, and darting into a door-way that bore the number indicated in the unsigned note.

There was no sign of life about the building when viewed from the street;—every shade was carefully drawn. Someone rushed out of the darkness from the other end of the hall, halting him.

A bill thrust hastily in that individual's hand proved an open sesame. "I—I—am not—an official," he volunteered, "I—I—want to look—on."

The man had recognized him; although Daniel did not know this, and escorted him to the ball-room without further ado,—restraining a chuckle over the—big fish—that were beginning to come to "look on, at their dances,—usually waiting the unmasking hour, to see the faces of the bewitching beauties whose costumes had caught their admiratoin.

The look-out put the Western Senator down as a man in this class. Daniel stood in the door-way watching the scene of revelry with dilated eyes.

He was used to the exuberant dances of the far west; he saw that they were like church-picnics in decorum, compared to this. It was gayer than he had seen in even Paris itself,—and ballet-costumes, what every woman and girl on the floor, dancing, was wearing.—It being the anniversary of a great Parisienne production in which the ballet was first introduced.

For a few moments Daniel stood in the doorway

quite bewildered at the gay spectacle before him. He scanned each couple that whirled past him with scorching eyes. He was just about to turn away, believing himself to be the victim of a cruel hoax—when suddenly his glance encountered Hugh Boyd. He was dancing with the utmost abandon, and clasped close in his arms he held a slender figure. With the exertion of the dance her hair had become loosened, and fell in a mass of rippling gold to her waist; and in that moment the silken cord which had held the mask in place gave way, falling to the floor,—disclosing the face of—Pauline—his—WIFE!

In that self-same instant, Boyd was also aware that Pauline's mask had slipped off,—and, ere she had an inkling of his intentions, he had caught her closer still in his clasp, kissing the unwilling lips so near his own.

With a mighty cry, that those who heard it never forgot, Daniel Weslow with a bound cleared the space that divided them. In a trice, he had torn Pauline from Boyd's arms. Thrusting her back of him with his left hand, he made a lunge at Boyd with his right that hurled him instantly to the floor.—In a twinkling Boyd regained his feet. Then followed a battle for supremacy the like of which had never been fought before. Daniel Weslow was the most powerful, but Boyd, the more agile and scientific.

The throng made a circle about the combatants, no effort being made to separate them;—indeed such fracas were of common occurrence there—two men battling fiercely—for—a woman. One last lunge sent Boyd sprawling upon the floor—in no hurry to rise.

Pauline had swooned. Raising her quickly in his arms, Daniel gained the door and was soon on the street. The taxi awaited him. Thrusting Pauline into it, he jumped in, giving the chauffeur the hurried direction "To the place you took me from."

He was not an instant too soon, just then a fleet of cars, hove in sight.—He realized, as did the chauffeur, that they had escaped the raid by a hairsbreadth.

The officers spotted the fleeing car, and one of their machines immediately started in pursuit. "Outwit them at any cost!" Weslow cried out to the chauffeur, "you can name your own price, my lad." The man nodded.

Then followed a desperate race between the pursued, and the pursuer,—one bullet after another crashing through the glass of the taxi as he sent his car madly on, defying their commands to—"Halt!"

Daniel had adopted the course he thought wisest and best to escape the dreadful notoriety that would have ensued had they been overtaken—and arrested, recognition following on the heels of it. He would protect Pauline from that at the cost of his life, if need-be.

At length Fate was kind to the fugitives; tire trouble overtook the pursuing car when they had almost come along-side of the dust-covered taxi.

Weslow's chauffeur saw, and instantly took advantage of the situation sending the taxi ahead with a dangerous speed over gulches, fallen boughs, and around curves, that fairly took Daniel's breath away. By a circuitous route he at length reached the Weslow

home, and turned away from it a hundred dollars richer because of his adventure.

Pauline was just recovering from her swoon as he laid her down upon the davenport in the library. She saw Daniel, standing before her with folded arms, his face white as it would ever be in death,—as she opened her dazed eyes. He put his hands quickly over her mouth to avert the scream of terror on her lips, as memory rushed back to her.

“Hush! you will awaken the servants!” he cried harshly, his intense gaze of fury burning down into her very soul.

“I will explain to you how it happened!” she sobbed, struggling to a sitting posture, “then you will understand—”

He interrupted her with the harshest laugh that ever fell from a man’s lips. “I understand—the whole accursed thing!” he cried. “You have outraged my love, my dignity, and my position—by surreptitiously meeting your—lover—in a place no respectable woman would have set her foot.—He pointed to her filmy, torn costume, his voice ringing with scathing words, branding her, allowing her no opportunity to defend herself.

She cowered from him in abject terror. She would not have been much surprised if he had forgotten himself so far as to have struck her with his upraised, clenched hand, so great was his anger toward her.

“Go to your room, now,” he commanded, “tomorrow I shall send you back to your father in New York. I will ask Miss Vallean to accompany you.”

Without a word Pauline arose; she did not know

how she was ever to reach the door, in that costume, with his withering, scorching gaze bent full upon her. His overpowering rage terrified her. As she reached the door as a parting shot, he called out to her:—"I could have had your lover—for whom the detectives are scouring the country,—arrested, then and there;—your presence there with him,—saved him;—for the time-being."

With stumbling feet Pauline groped her way through the corridor, up the stairs,—meeting Marcelle as she opened her boudoir door.

To her great surprise Marcelle made no offer to take her in her arms and try to console her. "Marcelle," she whispered, "let me tell you all—that—has—happened to me."

The French girl turned from her with a shrug of her shoulders. "You don't need to; you forget the library door was open;—it being directly under this room, I heard distinctly every word he said to you."—I was—quite amazed to hear—you were caught—dancing—with your old lover!"

"Listen, Marcelle, do not be like him; do not condemn me unheard;—you will not censure me when you know—how it came about;—I was unwilling to dance—I should not—"

Marcelle interrupted her with a taunting laugh.

"You would have a hard time trying to convince the world—of—your—innocence. Do you know what you have done!—you have ruined Daniel Weslow's prospects for all time to come. He is living in the hope that you and he escaped detection, while, on the

contrary, two newspaper reporters were on hand, awaiting an expected raid of the place. They knew him, and knew he was there—the worst place imaginable,—and got into a broil over a woman. He wouldn't dare say—it was—his—WIFE. He must shield your name at all hazards. By tomorrow, there is not a paper in Washington that will not have an account of their—HONORABLE—Senator's escapade. I have my opinion as to how it will end for him.”

“Oh, Marcelle, tell me what I am to do! Come with me now to the newspapers and I will tell them just how I happened to go there. You will tell them too, Marcelle, that you said to me that it would be quite all right for me to go.—Remember I went on a charitable mission—to help the poor.”

Again Marcelle's taunting laugh fell on her troubled ears.

“You ask me what is best for you to do, Pauline Weslow, and I am going to tell you:—You must go away at once, within this hour,—go so far away that—Daniel Weslow will never find you—to wreck his vengeance upon you.—Believe me, you have turned his love to the direst hatred. For your own safety's sake, you must leave him, and go far away, I say.”

Pauline came up to her, catching frantically at her skirts. “There—is—a reason—why—I—should not—leave—Daniel!” she whispered faintly. “I—oh, I—never realized—until now—that I must love him, for I—” she whispered the rest of the sentence brokenly into Marcelle's startled ear, adding:—“Now you see why I—must not go from him.”

"Does he—know?" queried Marcelle, sharply, "I imagine not, or he would have mentioned the subject to you tonight."

Pauline shook her head, answering faintly, "No—I—did—not—tell—him. He has decided to send me to father—tomorrow. I would rather die than go there."

"You are quite right,—you ought not to go to your father. You must take the mid-night train for New York, connecting there for Chicago, anywhere—the farther away—the better. I will furnish you with the money. You must never write to Weslow;—write to me, and I will keep you informed as to what the chances are—if any—to effect a reconciliation. Such men as Daniel Weslow, grow more bitter with passing time, often."

In her hysterical plight, Pauline was not strong enough to combat Marcelle's strong will, or think for herself.

"You must wear your plainest clothes, Pauline," she went on, "a dark cloth dress—and cape. I have a small dark hat and veil, you must wear them." With deft hands she packed a small grip. "You need not even have the trouble of purchasing a ticket to New York, but can use the one I was to return on."

For the second time that night, Marcelle hustled Pauline out of the house, giving the chauffeur of the taxi,—which, by the way, happened to be the same one,—the directions:—To the Grand Central Depot.

Marcelle entered her room again, just in time to answer her phone which was ringing. She was startled to find it was Boyd speaking.

“I suppose by this time, you have heard all about the fracas that took place;—I’m a little the worse for handling, but don’t look it. The plan worked out beautifully; the dear girl signed the deed which makes over to me—as is clearly specified,—every foot of property she owns, both in Washington, and the far west;—also signing the paper my friend Reardon was so anxious about—which is an action for a divorce against Weslow. They will be filed—both papers,—the moment the recorder’s office is open tomorrow morning. I take the midnight train for New York,—my friend Reardon stopping over another day, to see what will be in the papers about tonight’s affair.”

It was Boyd’s turn to register surprise when Marcelle guardedly told him what had transpired after Weslow had gotten Pauline home;—the fierce quarrel,—and the last surprising news that Pauline had left Daniel, and that she, too, was taking that same midnight train for New York. She could hear Boyd laugh boisterously.

“The newspapers will also be informed, that the golden haired beauty who was the cause of Weslow’s jealousy, accompanied the man she had been dancing with,—to New York, on the Midnight-Express,” laughed Marcelle.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT IS LIFE WORTH, IF WE LOSE THE ONE WE LOVE

“The mind has a thousand eyes
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of the whole world dies
When Love is done.”

UPON Pauline's departure from the room, Daniel Westlow had dropped into the nearest seat, like one stricken—awaiting death. It seemed to him he was in the grip of a horrible nightmare from which he must awaken, finding all the events through which he had just passed, were but the imaginings of an overworked brain. With his arms leaning on the table, and his head upon them,—his mind traveled slowly over all that had occurred.—It was no dream;—he wished to Heaven it were.

Out of his chaotic thoughts, all that was clear to him, was, that he and the young wife he had loved better than life itself,—Pauline, whom he *still* loved,—were parted;—that from this hour—they would be as strangers to each other,—he would have to live—without her. He felt that this would be impossible. To some men love is a passing fancy, perishable as the down of the thistle;—to others it is a net-work which is woven so securely about the heart it gradually becomes a part of it;—dominating, hope, joy,—all that makes life worth living.

Since the hour he had first noticed Pauline's coldness to him, he had been wont to think:—There are those who indulge in overdoses of affection,—those who are

contented with moderation,—and in strange contrast, there are those whose hearts are famished for want of it;—he, belonging to the latter class. While out in the far west Pauline had been drawn into the confession to him—that she did not love him,—that there was another lover in the background.

This discovery had nearly killed him,—Mrs. Bemis had assured him this was but a girlish fancy on Pauline's part, that marriage would surely cause the old fascination to fade from her heart, and a newer, stronger, deeper love,—a wife's love for her husband,—take its place,'—and— he had been foolish enough to put credence in it,—aye,—consign himself to a fool's paradise.

After coming to Washington,—she had met Boyd again, and the old glamor had taken possession of her;—the old love had revived. He believed that was the solution of her coldness to himself;—the woman who has a lover in the background, chafes under the ties that bind her to another.—It had ended—disastrously, as such cases do.

On the morrow he intended to send Pauline to her father,—to wait there, until he could get to New York to confer with Senator Rae, as to what course was best for him to pursue. He concluded to wait until morning to phone him to tell him to expect her.

All through the long hours of the wretched night that dragged their slow lengths by Daniel sat thinking—thinking! At length day broke, the sun rose bright and golden in the eastern sky. Sitting there, Daniel heard the whistling milkman pass under the window to the

rear of the house, and the footsteps of the servants passing down the stairs;—then, the newsboy as he threw the morning paper in through the iron gate-way.

He aroused himself with an effort. —a trembling fear seizing him—that there might be something in the morning paper concerning what had transpired. Seizing the paper, he hurried back to the library, carefully closing the door after him. He had barely seated himself, spreading it open, ere the picture of himself confronted his horrified gaze. Yes, there it was, the whole story of his being in the place scheduled for raiding, and of his battle with another man, over a beautiful blonde. It went on to state, that the man whom the Senator from the west, had temporarily vanquished,—was seen boarding the midnight train for New York,—the petite blonde in question having boarded it a few minutes before.

At that moment the servants heard a heavy fall from the direction of the library. Hurrying there, they found Daniel Weslow lying face downward upon the floor, the paper clutched in his hand.

The physician who was hastily summoned,—looked grave.

Three days later, Marcelle was permitted to enter the sick-room, and then, but for a few moments, and in the doctor's presence,—who warned her against causing the patient the least excitement.

Daniel, looking up, as she stood beside the couch, noted she had been weeping. “Do not feel sorry for me Miss Valteau, he murmured, I am praying to—pass away,—not to recover. They tell me there was a dreadful wreck—Pauline perished.”

Marcelle's tears fell afresh, the doctor's warning glance held her in check.

"I know all, dear Miss Valteau," he whispered brokenly,—even that she fled—and—with—Him. Only last week I deeded to her—everything I owned—in the world,—she signed it all over to—him. I know too—she—has—instituted divorce proceedings against me. I shall resign from the senate—in which I shall never show my face again,—the—resignation to take place, at once—under my—physician's orders. It is well—this—happened as it is about to—adjourn.

"You will soon be well and—strong again—to return to your home in the west," she sobbed, adding, "I too, intend to go west—soon."

He shook his head wearily;—"I am accompanying the doctor abroad"—I may return years from now,—perhaps I may never come back.

"Being penniless, I begin my life work—all over again; I—shall find work of some kind to do. Good-bye, Miss Valteau," he said as she was turning away, "we will probably never meet again!"

Marcelle groped her way from the room. Once in her own apartment, she gave vent to the full torrent of rage that was consuming her.

Her every plan had miscarried. She had hoped to gain Daniel Weslow's heart in the rebound, marrying him when he was—free.

Now, he was going away, penniless,—a man broken in heart, health and spirits. I had best get back to New York and attend to old Senator Rae," she concluded. She could hear the doctor giving orders to the servants

that "Senator Weslow was to be removed within the hour,—and the house must be closed—at once." The city being rife with the news the midnight express had been wrecked—few escaping death by fire.

She was not permitted to see Daniel again. Late that afternoon she reached the Rae home. As she had expected, the household was all upset over the story printed in the afternoon papers copied from the Washington morning dailies, adding the news of the wrecked express and the sacrifice of scores of lives.

She found the old Senator pacing the floor like a veritable madman. Over the phone, Daniel's doctor had verified all he had read, and that he was taking Daniel abroad. The old Senator was so agitated he even forgot to greet Marcelle with his usual kiss;—when she called attention to it, he performed the salute mechanically.

"Your daughter fled with her old lover, now she is no more," she whispered,—“but you—have *me* to love you.” She saw, with consternation, that he did not enthuse as in the past over the prospect. At that moment, the old Senator lapsed into such a spell she was alarmed lest he should pass away at any time. It was certainly a fact that his ardor had cooled considerably. His one cry was for his daughter—Pauline, always for Pauline.—She concluded there was no time to be lost in marrying him.—When she broached the subject, he made no answer.—I had intended to come back a week before, in response to your urgent appeals,—but could not get away from Pauline sooner,” she murmured.

As she spoke, he turned his face from her, and she heard him murmur:—"Oh, Pauline—Pauline!"—Dead—in all her youth and beauty. I do not want to live—now that my child—has gone from me!"

Marcelle bit her lip fiercely. "Oh, do not talk like that!" she cried—"because you are so unhappy and lonely, our marriage shall not be put off any longer; you need me, and I have concluded that the marriage shall take place at once, quite as soon as you can secure a license and a clergyman to officiate."

He shook his head sorrowfully, "No, no, Marcelle, that was all a mistake I see now, as never before—youth should wed youth;—an old man is not a proper mate for a fair young woman. You must forget anything of that kind that may have been said between us."

"You do not,—you cannot mean that, Senator Rae," she panted, springing to her feet and looking at him with darkening, flashing eyes.—"After winning all of my young heart's love, do you mean that you would cast me off in that fashion? It takes two people to make a bargain, therefore, two to break one."

"No man should ask a woman to marry him unless he intends to do so—if she consents—or—stand the chance of being *made* to do so."

"Marcelle,—Miss Valteau,—you forget yourself," he responded with dignity, I hardly think you meant the last part of that sentence. It does not become a young woman to insist upon marriage when it has become distasteful to the other party equally interested. I have been thinking the matter all over, I say, and I feel that

it would not be right to marry you. I may have been a little hasty in proposing marriage, but, even so, it was the fault of the head, not the heart."

As Marcelle saw the prospect looming before her of losing the Rae fortune,—(and she could never go back to cabaret work now),—she grew furious over the obstinacy of the old man.

"I did not mean to cause you grief in any way," he went on. "The time will come when you will look back to this scene and say:—'The old Senator was right. I thank Heaven that I did not make the sacrifice of becoming his bride.' You will in time, meet some good, and true young man who will easily make up for what you may now consider—a loss."

Marcelle stood before him trembling with blinding passion.

"Nothing that you can say, changes my determination," she declared. "If I sue you, the law would give me the greater part of your fortune."

Senator Rae rose to his feet, with great dignity facing her. "We shall see," he cried, shaking his cane fiercely at her. "I will make a test case of this for the benefit of elderly men who may be tempted to wed young girls,—and open their eyes to the fact that they are marrying them to spend their money. Go right ahead with your breach-of-promise suit young woman. You will find old Lawyer Rae—who never shrunk from battle yet,—either in the courts, or the Senate, is ready to meet a foe upon any ground, and cross swords if need be. Good Afternoon—and—Good-bye!"

Marcelle instantly saw she had gone too far, and that

she must endeavor to temporize with the irritable old man.

She dropped on her knees before him, seizing his hand, and covering it with kisses.—“I—did not mean all that,” she sobbed, “the thought of your putting me away from your heart—made me desperate, believe me. I love you so much, Senator, that I cannot live without you. Oh, surely you have too great a heart to change your sentiments, and turn your love against a poor, friendless girl—who has neither father nor mother, nor any one to turn to to comfort me in this hour of woe—because of some unknown change that has come over you. Oh, do not put me from you, out of your life, poor little Marcelle, who loves you so,—I shall die if you do.”

He looked at her in consternation; she could see he was wavering, and she thought of the line, “He who hesitates, is lost,” and renewed her pleadings to be taken back to his heart as his promised bride.

It was an unequal battle for supremacy. Had he, after all, misjudged her motive in insisting upon marrying him? She was so wondrously beautiful, and ever since the world began men have fallen for beautiful women—unable to say them nay when they plead with them.

“Do not grieve, so, my dear child,” he said distressedly, “yes, yes, I will take you back to my heart, if you insist you will be happy only if I do this,—and I suppose the wedding can take place whenever you desire. It is as you say, Marcelle,—My daughter has passed away, in all the world—I have—only—you.”

She looked up at him through her tears. The matter was settled.

* * * * *

But to return to the midnight express, as it whirled out of Washington.

Boyd, watching, saw Pauline board the train. He made up his mind not to acquaint her of his presence on board, being by no means sure of the reception he would meet with. If she were to expose his identity,—it would mean prison for him. He went on into the smoker to think out a line of procedure. He had no use for Pauline, now that he had secured her fortune,—but he could not help realize she was far more beautiful now than she had been in the old sweetheart days. She was therefore——”

He did not finish the line of thought over which he had spent quite an hour. Suddenly he was tossed through the open window at which he had been sitting, landing, bruised and bleeding on the edge of an embankment.

Ere he could struggle to his feet wild cries rent the air, swallowed up in the sound of a terrific crash; and amidst the awful groans and shrieks for aid that rent the air,—volumes of smoke and great tongues of flames shot upward. It was not until the grey dawn broke that the extent of the awful holocaust became ascertained, and the work of rescuing those who had not been consumed by the flames begun.

Not one had escaped from the second Pullman car, they said. That told Boyd, Pauline had perished, in it. He made a get-away without losing further time.

As a matter of fact, finding no seat in the car she had entered, Pauline had secured a seat in the last car. She had been found, among others, pitiably crushed, and scorched—but still breathing faintly.

For a moment, the village night-watch,—of the little town outside of which the holocaust occurred—was at a loss what to do with her, concluding she was nearly done for,—but his tenderness of heart would not let him leave her there. He carried the slight form to his own home a short distance down the road. “A young miss I found—dying, Mary,” he whispered—“we’ll put her on the bed—the end will soon come.”

A few moments later his wife joined him on the porch. “She is *not* a young miss,” she said;—“she must be—a married woman, but—there is no wedding ring on her poor little bruised hand.”

“Let her be whom, or what she may, it is our duty to keep her beneath our roof—until we make sure whether she is to live,—or—die. It is fortunate your brother, Dr. Northby, is on his way to visit us, arriving at any time now.—He will see to it—that she does not pass out of this world without having done everything possible to save her.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE IS A DESTINY WHICH SHAPES OUR ENDS, ROUGH—
HEW THEM AS WE MAY

“Ah! what avail, the largest gifts of Heaven
When drooping health and spirits go amiss?
How tasteless then, whatever can be given,
Health is the vital principle of bliss.”

DOCTOR Northby arrived shortly after. His sister, Mrs. Reed quickly informed him of the stranger beneath their roof, and her critical condition; he went at once to her bed-side.

A few moments later, with a perturbed face, he appeared in the door-way, calling his sister to the stranger's bed-side.

They talked long and earnestly;—the outcome of it was, his decision that she would be under that roof two months or more,—that is, if she lived through all that was before her.

“Whoever she belongs to, must be dreadfully worried over her,” said Mrs. Reed, looking down pityingly on the white, childish face, with the soft tangled rings of golden hair curling about it.

Together she and the doctor worked over her; then, to their intense relief they saw the blue eyes open slowly. Pauline looked up in bewilderment into the two kindly faces bending over her, and at the plain little room in which she found herself.

“I will talk to her alone,” whispered the doctor,—

motioning his sister to leave the room. The first question he put to her was the request for her name, that her people might be notified.

Tears choked her voice;—all he could make out was—Lene, or Lena—Wess—or Weis;—and the name—Lena Weis,—was the one the doctor sent out by telegraph to the Rail-road officials in Washington, who had the matter in charge. The Night-watch suggested sending her to the nearest hospital but his wife shook her head. Quite a little sum of money was found pinned inside of her waist, she said.—“She will pay out of that for all we do for her,—besides,—my brother, visiting here, can give her his full and undivided attention. Her case is a pitiful one, requiring unusual skill,—which my brother possesses.”

When asked for her home address, Pauline shook her head with a burst of tears, answering—she “had no home, no one on—earth who loved her.” The apparent desolation of her situation brought tears of pity to the eyes of the honest young physician. He was greatly pained to hear her sob, over and over again, that she wanted to die—and end it all.

Very gravely, and earnestly, the doctor explained why she must bend every endeavor to regain her strength—and—live. She only looked up at him through blinding tears, whispering—“death would be kinder than life.”

Doctor Northby had intended staying only a fortnight on this visit to his sister, but, as the days wore on, he became so deeply interested in his patient, he decided to remain, and see her illness through to the very end.

Mrs. Reed and her husband were growing uneasy over the matter.

“What will become of his practice in the town he left, when he came here?” she would say. “His patients there will find another physician, if he persists in remaining away;—I wish I had taken your advice in the first place, John, and sent her to a hospital;—it is too late now,—she cannot be moved, he says.”

“Your brother is in love with Lina Weiss, despite all the suspicions we have, regarding her. You are blind not to have noticed it, Mary.”

“Indeed I *have* noticed it John,” returned his wife tearfully. “We must use strategy to get her away, when she is ready to go; leave that to my woman’s wit—to find a way.”

It was certainly due to Dr. Northby’s wonderful care that Pauline lived.—At the end of the tenth week, a wonderful event took place:—A little stranger was ushered into this world of conflicting cares and sorrows.

“A fine boy, Lena,” announced the doctor, placing the infant in her arms. “Now, you see,—you have much to live for.”

At the end of the two weeks that followed, Dr. Northby was forced to go back to his home-town to look after the patients whom he had left to care of a brother-physician.

It was the hardest thing he had ever done,—to try to say farewell to Lena Weiss. Like everyone else in the cottage, he was completely charmed with the baby.

“If Lena will consent, we will adopt it,” declared

Mrs. Reed, adding:—"John is quite as anxious as I am."

"I intend to ask the same question of Lena," replied her brother, "only I shall add to the request, that I want to adopt Lena as well; that is—I shall ask her to—marry me."

"Oh, Theodore! Theodore! what can you be thinking of! You must be mad to even think of taking home a bride—and—a—baby! There would be such a scandal—"

He interrupted her angrily. "As long as I am satisfied, it is no one else's affair!" he retorted. "I love her!—that is all there is about it."

Pauline refused the young doctor, with tears in her eyes. He would not take no for an answer. "I will come back in a week for my answer, Lena," he said, gravely. "Let me protect you forever more;—give the baby my name.—I—shall never ask you to reveal anything regarding your past, unless you feel disposed, sometime in the future, to confide in me;—then you will find how my pity and love will shield you." She turned from him with a burst of tears. "Think it over carefully and well, Lena," he said, "remembering I will return in a week from now—for my answer."

He kissed both of her little white, fluttering hands, fondled the baby affectionately,—and a moment later was gone. Pauline watched the stage which bore him away,—out of sight,—knowing she would never look upon his face again. There would be another stage, going the other way,—to connect with the train for New York,—passing two hours later. She determined to take it.

Mrs. Reed did not seem to demur over her announcement—though she did weep over the knowledge they must part with the baby.—During that fortnight, it had cuddled close to the woman's childless heart.

“What have you decided to call the little fellow, Lena,” she asked, drying her eyes—and patting his fat little cheeks.

“I shall call him Paul.” This lifted a load from Mrs. Reed's heart. She had feared Lena might be tempted to call him Theodore, after the doctor. Much as she liked the baby, she would not have brooked that. John had expressed the same opinion.

As Mrs. Reed had surmised, she received half of the sum of money that had been pinned so securely by Marcelle, in the girl's waist.

It must be added that it was with genuine regret, she saw Lena and the baby depart. The cottage would be lonely without them.

It was dusk when Pauline, with her child clasped close in her arms, reached New York. She meant to place the baby in her father's arms, throw herself on his bosom, begging him to love them both,—as he had loved her in the old days,—for her dead mother's sake.

She took a taxi to her old home, dismissing it a few doors away. A drizzling rain had begun to fall, but she scarcely heeded it.

The Rae home was one of the New-York suburban homes set in spacious grounds. One by one the stars had gemmed the blue sky above, only to be covered by the thick blanket of storm clouds, presaging the

shower which it was hoped would cool the world on this sweltering July night.

She opened the iron gate; as she expected, Laddy-Boy, the great air dale sprang from out of the bushes, leaping toward her with a blood-curdling howl issuing from his distended jaws. Pauline stood quite still, putting out her hand, whispering softly:—"Laddy-Boy, don't you know me!" For an instant the dog stood still, regarding her, crouching, for the leap at her which he was to make. In that instant, a little house-maid whom she had never seen before, flew quickly down the path, calling:—"Laddy-Boy! Laddy-Boy!" dashing forward in the nick of time, as she supposed,—to avert a tragedy.

Instead of struggling to free himself, the dog began to bark joyously. Pauline knew he had recognized her.

"Is Senator Rae within?" inquired Pauline falteringly, leaning weakly against one of the pillars of the post.

For an instant the maid stared blankly into the white face turned so wistfully toward her.

"Do you not know? Why, you must be a stranger hereabouts,—to ask that question," she made answer. "Senator Rae,—poor old gentleman—is dead. He was buried nearly two months ago."

For an awful moment the darkness of death seemed to enfold Pauline; the world seemed to stand still, and her heart to slowly break then and there,—she put out her hands blindly, and clasping the baby closer in her arms, sunk down on the stone step.

"Come around to the kitchen and let me get you a

glass of water;—or, perhaps you would take a cup of tea, warm though the night is—gazing at the white, pitiful face raised to her own.—You look faint and worn.”

Pauline shook her head. Words failed her.

“Is that a little baby in your arms?” queried the girl, and without awaiting a response, she went on:—
“Bring it into the house—out of the rain; it is only a shower, you will be welcome to wait inside until it is over. Come.”

She half led, half carried Pauline to the rear of the house and into the cool, white tiled kitchen. The rest of the servants did not seem to be about.

“I think I will get you a glass of milk,” she said. Everything about the room was exactly the same—except the strange face of this kind-hearted little maid. Pauline almost expected to see the door leading to the hall-way open, and her father come quickly over the threshold, his face beaming with love,—holding out his arms to her.

She could fancy she heard him saying:—“You did wisest and best to come back to your old father, my dear. No matter what the world may say of you in its harshness, you will always find a refuge from life’s storm on your father’s bosom. ”

Pauline aroused herself from the stupor stealing over her, endeavoring for baby’s sake, to drink the cooling glass of milk the maid had brought her. Was it true that he was—dead—dead? Ah! pitying God! how could she realize it.

“Of course, you haven’t heard the story of the old

Senator's death, and what caused it, or you would not be here calling for him," said the maid.

"No—no—I haven't heard," faltered Pauline, "won't you tell me?" The girl did not seem to notice her agitation, and eagerness.

"It's a sad story, ma'am," she began. "The doctors and the neighbors say he died of apoplexy,—but I say he died of a broken heart—and it is that will-o'th-wisp daughter of his who caused it—and will have to answer for it. The old Senator had a beautiful young daughter whom he fairly worshipped. His one worry in life was to see her safely married, for he was not at all sure how she would turn out. He picked out a husband for her—a noble gentleman, who, like her father, fairly idolized her.

"She had a lover back;—a dreadful scamp,—everything that was bad. It seems she kept on with her old lover after she married. They went together, one night to a masked French ball—. While they were there the husband received a letter in a woman's handwriting,—though it was disguised,—advising him to go and confront them there,—which he did. No one knows just how it happened, but she and the lover made a get-away, then and there,—eloping together to this city, on the midnight train. The next morning two things had happened—the midnight train had been wrecked with a frightful loss of life. Her retribution,—death had followed quickly on the heels of her escapade.

"Perhaps I am tiring you with hearing of the old Senator's mad-cap daughter," said the maid looking

anxiously at the white face that was each moment growing more ghastly.

“No—no,—” faltered Pauline, “I—I—am greatly interested,—go on.”

The gossiping maid looked pleased—she was fond of telling the story of the romance—which had ended in a tragedy,—to anyone who had not heard it. Smoothing her apron, and pouring out a second glass of milk for the stranger, she went on glibly:—

“Of course, the husband, as might well be expected, was beside himself with grief—but the morning held quite as severe a shock for the poor man.

“It appears that the papers got hold of the story,—and the whole thing came out in print. When the news came out of the wreck of the midnight express,—the train the elopers took,—and that she had paid the penalty of her sin with her life,—he fell to the floor like one dead. For a week they expected him to go too. His doctor took him away to Europe with him a few days later. The husband had resigned as Senator.—The papers printed that he never intended to come back to these shores where he had had so much tragic sorrow.

“The worst part of it was:—a week or so before this affair happened, he had signed over to his flirting wife, every penny he had in the world. Over seas, he must find work wherever, and as best he can.—To finish the calamity, for him, it appeared that on the very night of the French ball, the foolish wife signed over her fine fortune to her lover:—It was put on file bright and early the following—morning. In addition,

she brazenly filed papers for a divorce, from the husband who had been so kind to her;—that went on file too. Had she lived she would have gotten it,—for her husband would never have put in an appearance to contest it.

“And now for the last of it:—As soon as the old Father learned what had happened,—like his son-in-law he could not face the disgrace of it;—he shut himself up here, refusing to see anyone—except—a beautiful young French girl, his daughter’s friend.

“Nobody knows just how it came about;—no doubt he was lonely and craved sympathy, the upshot of the affair was:—the old Senator turned around and married the French girl; and—to please his beautiful young bride,—he,—at her request,—settled the whole of his fortune upon her—as his wedding gift to her. You see he had no one else to leave it to.

“The rumor went the rounds that before the old Senator married he tried to make restitution to the son-in-law for his loss,—but the husband would not accept it. Very soon after his marriage, the old Senator passed away.—Those at his bedside said he called piteously for his daughter—forgetting she was no more.

“The young wife did not care a rap. Everyone knew, when he passed away, that she did not weep a tear—she found herself—a wealthy widow.

“She sold the house to these people now living in it, and threw the fierce old watch dog into the bargain.”

Pauline could hear no more; she rose quickly to her feet, and with a faltering “Thank you,” groped her way from the house.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN LIFE'S GOLDEN DREAMS ARE OVER

“In the dark, our fortunes often meet us;
If fate be not, then what can we foresee?
Or how can we avoid it, if it be?
If by free-will, in our own paths we move,
How are we bounded by decrees above?
Whether we move, or whether we are driven—
If ill 'tis ours; if good, the act of Heaven.”

LIKE one in a dream, Pauline, holding the baby close in her arms, made her way to the Grand Central Railway station.

“I want to go—as far as I can,—it does not matter where,” she murmured,—looking piteously at the ticket-agent.

“How would San Francisco suit?” he queried, choking back a laugh.

“As well there as anywhere,” she answered. “How soon will the train start?”

“You are just in time to make it,” he answered, taking a second, searching look at Pauline who was turning away.

San Francisco—at last!—after what seemed to Pauline days and days of endless journeying. She wondered that the baby had stood it as well as he had. She sat down in the waiting-room, trying to think out what she was to do now—in the far-west. Counting over the few bills she had left, she found she had barely enough to last her—a week,—and then—!

One of the cleaning-women of the waiting room came up to her, touching her on the arm. “Do you know, ma’am you have been sitting here long hours;—your baby has been crying—you do not seem to hear;—are you—in trouble? If you are the baby’s mother, you ought to see that it looks—very—ill.”

A cry broke from Pauline’s white lips, and she bent down covering the little face, and tiny groping hands with kisses. Rising weakly to her feet, she inquired of the woman if she knew of any clean, respectable place where she and the little one could find shelter for the night.

“Yes,” the woman knew of just such a place. “A dear old body, an aged lace-mender, who lived alone, might take her in. As I go from work, I pass her door;—I will take you there—and you can see.”

Pauline thanked her with tears in her eyes.

Old Grand-ma Carey looked long and earnestly at Pauline and the baby,—ere she decided they might stay. It was well they found shelter there,—for, the old lady discovered, the baby had a high fever. On hearing this,—Pauline was frantic. “Oh, do not tell me he is ill unto death!” she sobbed wildly. “Surely God would not take him from me!—He is all I have in this great cruel world to love—and—cling to. I must send for a doctor quickly.”

Grand-ma Carey shook her head. “I can bring the little fellow around if any-one can,” she asserted—“I have had much experience.” Then followed heroic nursing night and day, until at length Grand-ma declared the crisis past—and he would now be on the

mend. At this juncture, Pauline tearfully disclosed to her, that her last penny had been used,—and she must find work somewhere, at something,—and at once.

“Try one of the big stores,” suggested grand-ma. “Your face is so sweet,—and you are so genteel in appearance,—they ought to be very glad to engage you.” Pauline procured employment in the large emporium to which Grand-ma Carey had directed her,—with little difficulty. She quickly learned, however, why it was that the great emporium never kept a clerk, or model longer than a week. The proprietor had a very jealous wife; who had a mortal dread of young and beautiful women. When it was discovered that Lena Weis, as she still called herself,—had a little child at Grand-ma Carey’s, and the husband of the young woman appeared to be non-est, the proprietor’s wife soon made it plain to Lena,—she must look elsewhere for a position.—She went the rounds of the stores, one after the other,—in every place finding her fair face a detriment in endeavoring to hold a position. Next she tried the factories, with the same result. The world of women seemed to band themselves against her,—to prevent her from earning bread for herself and baby.

Grand-ma Carey thought long and earnestly over the matter, coming at last to the conclusion that there was work enough in the lace-mending business—for two.—Her fingers were not as nimble as they used to be,—and her eyesight failing. She could not make as much as a younger woman could.

Lena seized upon the idea of helping her, with intense joy. “I will work early and late,” she declared.

“For a change, you can attend to the home duties, and I will ply the needle.” This arrangement was highly satisfactory to the old lady. As the days wore on, baby learned to creep, then to walk, and prattle—the young mother watching him with fond eyes.

Grand-ma Carey would have been pleased to find out Lena’s history, but the girl never alluded to her past. The only time she spoke of the baby’s father, was when Grand-ma, on one occasion, watching him, said:—“He has your hair and blue eyes; otherwise, he probably resembles his father.”

“Yes, baby Paul resembles his father—very much,” she assented musingly—then she quickly turned the conversation into another channel.

There was one thing that worried Grand-ma Carey, and that was, Lena wore no wedding ring;—of course, everywhere she had worked, they must have noticed its omission from her hand,—commenting upon it most unkindly.

By dint of much saving, Grand-ma bought a ring, for Lena, requesting her to wear it, to stop gossip.

“I had one—just like this—but I lost it,” the girl said; “my hand was—badly crushed;—that caused it to slip off unnoticed.—Yes, I will wear this ring you have so kindly provided for me;—I—am grateful to you for reminding me—it is my duty to little Paul, to do so.”

But time never lingers with the present, but rushes us pell-mell onward through the years. Seven birthdays of little Paul’s had converted the puny babe into a rollicking youngster, dearer than anything the wide world held to his mother,—and the idol of Grand-ma

Carey. The poor old soul was now too feeble to ply her needle; she would have had to have gone to the poor-house, had not Pauline took upon her own shoulders, the burden of support of the three of them.

“Mumzy,” cried little Paul coming in excitedly from school, one day:—“All the other chaps are selling newspapers, an’ gettin’ rich!—I want to sell papers too. Please, Muzzy, do let me.” His kisses, tears, and entreaties at last conquered. His mother gave a reluctant consent, for it was against her will.

On the day the boy first began selling papers, he got his first inkling of what rubbing elbows with the rough street gamins meant.

Little Paul started out bravely enough,—coming home an hour later so torn, battered, and mud-splashed, his mother cried out in terror, inquiring what had happened.

“Oh, nothing, but I’ve had three fights a’ready,” he declared, standing up for his mother to wip the mud from his face. “I licked Micky O’Grady, for grabbing my papers, and Timmy Ryan for trying to take my—pennies,—an—th’ other boy, I forget his name, for laughing at me an’ tryin’ t’ sic th’ other fellers on me. I—beat ’em, Muzzy.”

“Oh! oh! you shall never go out selling papers again!” sobbed his mother; “I will work twice as hard, my darling boy,—to keep you from it.”

Little Paul threw up his head proudly, exclaiming:—“I’m no coward, Muzzy. If a boy hits at me, I’ll hit back, no matter how big he is.”

“You’ll have to let the lad out among other boys,

dear," decided Granny. "He must learn the lesson of—defending himself, Lena."

"He might become coarse, and brutal in the experiment, like so many of the children in this tenement;—I—could not endure that."

During the days that followed, little Paul was fully initiated in the seamy side of life. Almost every day he met with some kind of an encounter.

He made Grand-ma Carey his confidante, regarding all that took place, begging her not to tell his mother.

There was another matter over which little Paul was greatly disturbed, and that was, his golden curls. "They make fun of me, and say they are only worn by girls, and that I ought to wear skirts," he sobbed.

Lena caught him in her arms and crushed him close to her heart. "Mother loves your golden curls, Paul," she murmured. "Let me keep my little boy, a child—just a little while longer—then I will consent to your having them cut off.—Just a little longer, Paul, dear."

For the first time in his life, she saw that he cried himself to—sleep;—His mother never dreamed of the torture he received at the hands of the other boys on account of them. It was brought home to her with cruel force, when he came home to her one day, with one half of his golden curls shorn from his head.

"All the boys got together, some of them held me, while the others did it—with a knife,—strewing them all over the alley, Muzzy."

While he slept, his mother cut from his head the balance of the golden curls; wrapped them in a bit of paper, kissed them and placed them in her bosom;—

she almost felt she was parting from baby—Paul,—forever.

It soothed her heartache to see how overjoyed he was when he woke up and discovered the offending ringlets were gone.

“Now I can be a cross-sweep, and make lots of pennies, Muzzy, when I am not selling papers,” he declared, dancing around the room. “It’ll snow tomorrow, and—I will sweep the crossings for the fine ladies and the nice men, an’ I’ll bring every penny home to you, Muzzy.”

A—cross-sweep! her boy—a cross-sweep! She wondered dully what the proud old Senator Rae would have said, had he but known his grandson—was—a—cross-sweep,—holding out his hand,—from his little torn jacket, past all mending,—soliciting pennies from the passersby.

The old life, and its luxuries seemed like a dream to her. Once in a while she found herself thinking of Daniel Weslow—wondering if he were living—or—dead. She knew that he believed she had perished in the wreck of the Washington midnight express,—and was satisfied to have it so.

He did not know of the existence of little Paul;—she wondered what he would say,—or do—if he were to see him.

The fear that he might desire to wrest the child from her, filled her with the gravest terror, and caused her to resolve, over and over again that he must never know of him.

At the very moment Paul’s mother was making this

resolve, Marcelle Rae, off in New York, was carelessly scanning the morning paper, over her cocoa and rolls. Suddenly the cup fell from her hand with a crash, and she sprang excitedly to her feet. The item which riveted her attention was an account of Daniel Weslow. She read it through again and again. It referred to Weslow as a one-time United States Senator who had, seven years ago, gone abroad penniless;—of his knocking about the old world for the following five years,—then shouldering his pick and spade like an ordinary day laborer, he had joined the rush whose objective point was the Klondike. He had staked out a claim upon which gold had been found. In the following two years he had piled up a colossal fortune,—and was sailing from China that day, for San Francisco, where he intended to remain a few weeks to promote some important mining deals,—then return to the Klondike.”

“Patience finds its own reward,” thought Marcelle. “I have traveled the length and breadth of Europe to locate him, but not a trace could be found.

She looked in her long pier glass; I am more beautiful than ever,” she murmured, satisfied with the reflection she saw there. “I will go at once to San Francisco. He will believe the meeting is purely accidental. I have never cared for any other man. I will fascinate and wed Daniel Weslow if it lies within human power.”

A telegram was soon flashing over the wires to the hotel at which the item stated Weslow was to stop,—asking that a suite of the very best rooms be reserved for Mrs. Ex-Senator Rae, and maid.

“I will be thrown in contact with him constantly,”

she mused, "and, with an opportunity of that kind, any woman ought to fascinate, and wed any man she sets her cap for." As a wealthy young widow, Marcelle had refused several really brilliant offers—from the standpoint of wealth.

"I would rather marry Daniel Weslow, if he hadn't a second shirt to his back," she mused, smiling back at the superb reflection in the glass.

At that moment, on ship-board, Daniel Weslow was standing on the deck, looking far out at sea. "Back to my native land—and no one there to bid me—welcome;—but I must not think of these things." Wheeling about, he was just about to enter the cabin, when he met the first-mate in the passage-way.

"Just a word with you, Mr. Weslow," he said, "I have learned there are card-sharps aboard—I heard them—discussing—You."

Weslow laughed;—"I'll keep my eyes and ears open, and my senses about me,—thanking you for the tip."

As the mate disappeared, a heavy-set dark bearded man passed him on his way to the deck.

Weslow gave him but a casual glance;—not so the other man;—he gave Weslow a glance of keen scrutiny, chuckling under his breath: "I knew Weslow would not recognize me;—my own mother did not know me. I would defy any one to discover in this bronzed and bearded stocky man,—the dapper, immaculate dandy—Hugh Boyd of seven years ago. Weslow has struck it rich,—and prospered;—while I have gotten rid of the handsome fortune I got hold of. I still have another

trump card to play, then I may be able to cry quits with Weslow."

Although Daniel had appeared to give the man but a casual glance,—in that one instantaneous meeting of their eyes, it occurred to him he had seen the man somewhere before,—but where, he could not tell. On board the vessel, the bearded stranger was known as Dunn,—a cattle man, hailing from Waco, Texas.

Daniel was not surprised to find this man, and two companions playing poker in the cabin the following night. He was invited to take a hand. At first he made up his mind to refuse;—on second thought he concluded to comply, seating himself on the opposite side of the table from Dunn. Without appearing to do so, Daniel watched the game much more closely than any one gathered about the board supposed.

He knew he had been marked as—a victim. "Let the best man win," he announced laconically as he reached out and took the cards, shuffling them to deal.

Dunn watched him breathlessly, he saw by the way he handled the cards, Weslow was no novice at poker. His accomplices who sat about the table, saw that too,—but what could a lone man do against the brace of them.

Every man at the table knew Weslow carried a large sum of money upon his person, and they meant that he should leave it with them.

CHAPTER XX

CONSPIRACY AT SEA

“Where evil may be done, ’tis right to ponder;
Where only suffer’d know, the shortest pause
Is much too long.”

THE game of poker moved along at a rapid pace; Weslow was winning at first, as they intended he should. Then Dunn concluded the occasion was ripe for action in the other direction. It was Dunn’s deal. —The man at Weslow’s right, made a racy remark, which Weslow knew quite well was for the purpose of detracting his attention for an instant. An instant was quite long enough for Dunn, the cleverest man at legerdemain in any country as his companions well knew, from much experience.

Quickly as he manipulated the cards, Weslow saw a card, disappear like a flash, up his sleeve.—Like a whirlwind he was on his feet;—the men saw, to their amazement, that he was armed to the teeth.

“Up with your hands, and onto your feet!” he commanded in a voice that told them the futility of disobeying. “Now file backward out of that door onto the deck, and to the rails,” was the next order. “Now for the third and last!” he shouted grimly, covering them with his weapons.—“Now, a backward hand-spring—everyone of you—into the water;—after you get a cooling off, it’s up to th’ captain as to whether he takes you back on ship-board again.—Over with you—without an instant’s hesitation.” A bullet whizzing

over their heads assured them they must obey instantly, if their lives meant anything to them. There was a unanimous splash,—two of them had obeyed orders—the third,—Dunn of the bushy whiskers, suddenly sprang at Weslow, dealing him a savage blow on the wrist, knocking the weapon from his right-hand. Then followed the fiercest, silent, savage battle that was ever waged on land or sea.

Seizing an instant's advantage, Dunn grasped the roll of bills in his adversary's pocket, thrusting them into his bosom.

In that instant, Weslow had grabbed the man by his beard—when lo!—it came off in his hand. In that instantaneous glance at his opponent, Daniel recognized the wretch who had wrecked his life—Hugh Boyd.

He sprang at him with mighty rage shouting hoarsely:—"In to the *death*—villain! dastard!"

Boyd, knowing he could not stand up under further punishment, took another tack. In less time than Daniel could fully comprehend what had happened, Boyd had cleared the rail leaping into the sea.

As Weslow sprang to the rail, he saw what escaped his attention before,—a tug following in the wake of the steamer,—toward which Boyd struck out. Weslow took aim, but as quickly dropped his weapon.—He could not take advantage of even his deadliest foe,—if he was not in a position to defend himself.

He saw the tug pick up the three men, then, quickly turn about, making for the Chinese coast. He turned and walked slowly to his stateroom; the bitterness of

death in his heart. He felt that chance had played him a mean trick in giving him the opportunity to meet the despoiler of his home, slaying him in combat,—or, meet death himself by the hand of his foe.

The disappearance of the gamblers produced no surprise on ship-board. “That’s part of their game—to fleece some victim, then make a get-away on a tug which has been following for the purpose of picking them up,” remarked one of the sailors.

In counting his cash, Daniel found he had much more than he had started in with. His first impulse was to heave it overboard as unlucky money,—upon second thought, he handed it over to the Captain for the Seamen’s Home, in America.

Daniel Weslow was very thoughtful the remainder of the voyage.—He had supposed Boyd had perished with Pauline in the wreck of the midnight Washington Express.—His name was not among the list accounted for.—He had escaped death,—could it have been possible that Pauline had also escaped? The thought unnerved him. He must find that out. There was but one way:—go back by way of China, set watchers on every vessel leaving the Chinese Port,—find Boyd, if money could accomplish it,—and force from him the truth,—whether Pauline has escaped,—or—if she had perished in the wreck.

Boyd should answer to him with his life for leading hapless Pauline astray.

It was in no enviable frame of mind Daniel Weslow landed in San Francisco. There were a score of taxis around the dock, but, as the morning was fine, he

chose to walk. He had hardly proceeded a block ere he became conscious of a small lad behind him, endeavoring to overtake him. Turning his head slightly, he observed a diminutive bit of humanity with a half dozen papers under his arm.

“Paper, mister!” piped the boy eagerly. Weslow shook his head.

To his surprise the lad flung himself down on the pavement, his feet in the gutter, and began to cry.

Weslow saw; stopped short, and retraced his steps, saying: “I believe I do want the paper, my lad; here’s a quarter,—keep the change.”

The smile of joy that overspread the little face, touched strangely, a chord in Weslow’s heart. Beneath all the dirt upon it, he saw that the lad must have a very comely face. “Why were you crying, boy,” he queried,—that is not manly, you know, to give way to tears because you have not sold all your papers.”

A wonderful pair of large blue eyes were upturned to him, and the youngster’s lips quivered, as he answered:—“We couldn’t—eat—unless—I sell th’ papers.—That’s what Granny told Muzzy today.”

“Are you—*hungry*, child?” asked Weslow laying a kindly hand on the little one’s shoulder. “Tell me, if you are;—here is an eating place, I will take you in to fill up.”

The little fellow sprung to his feet with alacrity, gasping, chokingly. “Muzzy’s sick, an’ we didn’t have—nothing—today, mister.”

“Where do you live;—is it far from her, lad?”

“Just around the corner, in Crow Alley, mister.”

“Come in to this restaurant while they are filling a basket for you to take home with you,—you shall eat—with me.”

The child's delight over the prospect—brought a tear to Weslow's eyes. The proprietor of the handsome cafe was none too well pleased to see the ragged urchin brought into his place.

“We want the best you can get up, regardless of price!” said Weslow in a voice which warned he would brook no interference in his apparent act of charity, or their refusal to serve the urchin.

The proprietor had just been reading of a multimillionaire, a Mr. Daniel Weslow of the Klondike, who was expected to arrive by the Hong-Kong, which had just docked;—and made a shrewd guess that the gentleman standing before him, was certainly he,—for he fitted the description of him, but, to make assurance doubly sure, he queried blandly:—

“Mr. Daniel Weslow, are you not—to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?”

Weslow bowed. “Show the gentleman—and—the—lad—to our best table;—take off the—RESERVED—card.” The waiter complied with alacrity.

“I guess you could eat better, and more if your face and hands were clean,” remarked Daniel, and beckoning the waiter back, he tossed him a bill saying, “Just see that the boy's face and hands get attention, will you?”

“Oh, certainly, with pleasure, sir!” gasped the man, amazed at the amount of the bill which had been flung at him, adding, “come along, dear little boy, “the gentleman will see how fine I will return you to him.”

“Oh, I wont go with him!—he—he—would beat me!” exclaimed the boy in terror, clinging convulsively to the hand of his new friend.

“What a strange notion,” murmured the waiter flushing, “I will be very kind indeed to you, my lad,”—you may trust me.”

Little Paul looked at him with dilated eyes; he recognized the man as the one who always chased him if he stopped even a moment to look wistfully in at the window which contained fine chicken, big ripe tomatoes, strawberries, and tempting pies. If by chance he was not noticed standing there, he had the opportunity of saying to himself:—“If I was rich I’d have a piece of that pie, and maybe a berry or two;—th’ rest I’d take home to Muzzy an’ Granny, an’ I would—”

He rarely got further than that without being chased. On two occasions, this very same waiter had thrown water on him, threatening if he ever caught hold of him, he’d make mince-meat of him.

No wonder little Paul was suspicious of his sudden friendliness.

“If you thought it would please me—would you go with him?” asked Weslow gently as he patted the little soiled hands of the boy.

With big tears standing in his eyes, the little lad then answered:—“I’d do anything you wanted me to do, mister—even if you wanted me to get a lickin’—from him.”

At that hour there were few patrons in the place, none in that choice part of the restaurant in which they were seated.

Throwing the waiter another bill of equal amount, Weslow said very quietly:—"Bring me a wet towel, soaped at one end—and turn your back."

This the waiter fetched with alacrity, and Weslow, standing the lad between his knees, had the dirt off in a twinkling.

"My, what a transformation!" he exclaimed, lifting the lad into his seat—why, you are the prettiest little one I ever saw, I believe. How proud your daddy must be of you."

"I never had a Daddy," answered the boy soberly, "an' that's what th'—children always tease me about! They all have daddies—every one of 'em 'cept me."

Weslow looked long and earnestly into the wistful, sad little face,—then out of the window,—thinking:—How cruel it was to bring a little one into the world, in such a case. Instantly he formed a most intense dislike to the Muzzy the spoke of so fondly.

He learned that the same waiter knew where the lad lived.

Ordering a large basket packed with the foods he selected from the menu he saw to it that they were taken around there without delay.

He could not have dined until that had been attended to. He also sent the message to his mother, or grand-ma, that little Paul would be home shortly and explain the meaning of it.

It delighted Weslow beyond words to see the hungry little urchin pitch into the food. To his surprise, he saw that the boy, poor as his folks must be—had table manners, using his knife, fork, and spoon correctly.

In the midst of his meal little Paul stopped short, beginning to sob.

“Oh, I must not eat all on my plate!” he faltered. “Please, can’t I do the rest of it up—and take it home to Muzzy—and Grand-ma?”

He was pacified only upon hearing just such nice food had already been sent around to his mother and Grand-ma.

Weslow was beginning to grow frightened, he was stowing away so much:

“I am never going to eat again, in all my life,” he announced solemnly laying down his knife and fork and smiling up at his new-found-friend.

“I shall be in town a month,” said Weslow, caressing the little hand he held at parting,—“any time you come across me, I’ll take you in this place, or one like it,—and give you as good a feed as you have had to-day.”

To his astonishment, the boy reached up his arms and clasped them about his neck, holding up his childish lips for a kiss, saying, “I wouldn’t want to live in this town Mister, if *you* went away.”

“Why!” asked Weslow, bending down and kissing the boy.

“Cause,—I *love* you! Love you next to Muzzy an’ Grand-ma!” he whispered.

The words from those childish lips, the touch of the baby lips, the caressing touch of those mites of hands, thrilled Daniel Weslow’s heart to the core;—thrilled it as it had never thrilled before in all the long years

of his life;—those years so fraught with sorrow and pain.

Catching the little form up in his arms, he crushed him to his bosom, murmuring brokenly:—“God bless you, little lad.—Would to God I could have known the joy of having a little boy like you—to love—and love me!”

He put the boy down gently, and watched him as he scampered away, and was lost to sight around the nearest corner.

A sigh broke from his lips as he turned, slowly, thoughtfully, and made his way to his hotel. The sensation of the touch of the boy's lips, and little hands lingered with him. At the hotel, the clerk recognized the name when he registered, and the finest suite of rooms in the spacious hotel were placed at his disposal, —overlooking the water, as he desired.

As Weslow was about to enter the elevator, a beautiful young woman stepped from it. One glance, and an exclamation of great surprise broke from her lips.—“Mr. Daniel Weslow!” she exclaimed, holding out her hand.

The recognition was mutual. “Mrs. Rae!” he returned.

“Do let us sit down in the lobby and chat a few moments!” she said. “I do not know when I have met a person I am so glad to see.”

He could not refuse to follow her to the lobby, place a seat for her, taking an adjacent one. He saw at once that the French girl who had wedded Senator Rae a

few years before, had blossomed into a wonderfully beautiful woman.

"I said—Mrs. Rae," he remarked gallantly, "but I should be surprised—if you had not changed your name since;—indeed, I cannot understand why you are still—the Senator's widow."

He saw a bright flush suffuse the olive cheek, her eyes dropped, and she answered in a low voice:—"If love should ever come to me;—a real love this time,—who knows but what I might consider marrying again."

"You are still young, and more attractive than ever, I should say, and the life of a woman, widowed, must be lonely for you."

"Oh, it is, it is," murmured Marcelle, putting a bit of a filmy lace handkerchief to her eyes. "It is so comforting to meet one who realizes that."

"What are you doing away off here in San Francisco!" he inquired, anxious to change the subject,—it was becoming too personal.

"I just came out to escape the rigors of a winter in the east; I shall remain here a few weeks,—and then go abroad—I haven't decided exactly where yet. How long do *you* remain here!"

"That depends upon the business which brings me here;—perhaps three weeks, possibly twice as long; my movements are uncertain."

"I am so delighted to hear you will be here quite as long as I shall," she murmured. "May I hope we shall see much of each other,—since we are both stopping at this hotel?"

"My business will not afford me much leisure, I fear,

but, if I can be of any service to you, to show you about,—I shall be pleased to do so.”

He offered the suggestion, because he felt that he was in duty bound to do so,—she had been so closely connected—with his unhappy past.

“Thank you so much! I should be so grateful if you would spare me a little of your time to escort me around a bit. I never dreamed I should meet any one I ever knew here. I—I—was—so—delighted—when I saw—you!”

CHAPTER XXI

FATE PUSHES THE BUTTON,—OPPORTUNITY FINISHES THE JOB

“They say our hands may grasp but joys destroyed.

Youth has its dreams, and middle-age an aching void,
Whose dead sea-fruit long, long ago has cloyed,
Whose might with wild, tempestuous storms is rife
And yet—a little hope can brighten life.”

MEETING the beautiful French woman again, was a matter of no importance to Daniel Weslow. An hour after leaving her, he had forgotten her. During the following week, she was quite in evidence; he could not turn a corner, in the most unexpected of places, without coming face to face with her—of course, he felt in duty bound to walk back to the hotel with her.

She raved over two plays which were to be brought out at the theatres within the course of the week; there was nothing for it but to invite her to go. She held him to his word of getting an automobile to show her the sights of the wonderful city of the golden west.

He could not help but notice what a confiding creature she was, and how much she depended upon him. “We are both—so lonely,” she sighed, as they were riding slowly past the great ocean front, one day. “How can I ever let you go out of my life again, oh, friend—whose friendship means so much to poor me!”

He looked at her, and was surprised to find that her

long, dark, curling lashes were heavy with unshed tears.

“Does my friendship mean all that to you?” he asked, surprisedly. She nodded her head, whispering below her breath,—but loud enough for him to catch the slowly sobbed out words:—“More than you will ever know!”

Daniel Weslow felt exceedingly uncomfortable. He was an honest man, unused to subterfuges; if a woman said a thing, it never occurred to him to doubt but what she meant it in all earnestness.

“The best of friends must part!” he remarked; but he got no further. “On the day you bid me farewell—to go back to your life in the Klondike—you will take the light of the world with you,” she whispered, hesitatingly, and in a faltering voice.

“Just what do you mean?” queried Daniel, bluntly. “Surely I have not made it so pleasant this past week for you that you will regret my going!”

Marcelle hid her face in her perfumed lace handkerchief. Looking down at her in dismay, Daniel wished he were anywhere but in the automobile beside her; he saw no chance of making a get-away. They were quite a way from the city; it would be an hour’s ride, or more, to get her back to the hotel. Laying one hand lightly, timidly, on his arm, she said:—

“Do not think less of me for being truthful, Mr. Weslow,—but—this is the first week, in all my entire life,—that I have been—happy;—yes,—happy—and—and—known how joyous—and satisfied life can become to a woman—when she has a strong arm to lean

upon; a good man by her side to shield her from the world's storms and dangers. I have looked forward to these outings with you, and the hours we—will pass together with a joy—almost unbelievable.”

He looked greatly distressed, and not a little embarrassed; turning to her he said gravely, “Believe me when I say I had no intention of arousing such a sentiment in your heart, Mrs. Rae;—I meant to extend—just a courtesy—in offering to see you about, during my stay here; if you attributed my words or actions to any deeper interest, I can only say that I am very—very—sorry.”

“It is too late to be sorry—when the mischief has been done;—you must have known away back in the past—I struggled hard not to—care for you—but—it was useless. You remember I had your picture in my room—always; I treasured it more than any other earthly—possession;—my poor heart had gone out to you.”

He looked at her—askanse. Yes, he *did* remember how she had his photograph in every room—his only, but attached no importance to that.

Suddenly he turned upon her reprovingly.

“I cannot realize that any woman should entertain any feeling save friendship for a man whom she knew to be married—you would not be guilty of such un-womanliness, Mrs. Rae?”

She interrupted him quickly, “Do not wrong me, Mr. Weslow, you were a *single* man when first I met you, and you won my heart—through my—gratitude. You recollect a young girl whom you rendered a service,

one evening, on the streets of Paris. I—am—that—girl. You left me without giving your name—or—address, other than you were an American from the Golden West. I could not forget you; I came to this country with one great hope in my heart—that Fate would bring us together. I arrived here, only to find—you had—just wedded another. Fate was cruel to me. Now—we meet again,—and—you are single,—as am I,——”

She stopped short; he could not pretend that he did not understand what she meant to convey,—that he should ask her to become his wife.

“I am amazed, dumbfounded! I hardly know what to say to you,” he said. “You know, as no one else does, the full story of my unhappy past. I loved my Pauline as few men love; her loss broke my heart. I will never love again, I could not—my heart lies withered in my bosom.”

“But, if you could make another human being supremely happy, with your presence,—would it not be worth your while——”

“I think we had better talk plainly, Marcelle,” he said. “You are giving me to understand that you have loved me from the first time we met; that is not unnatural,—under the circumstances that happened at the time. When you found me married,—you hid your sentiments in your own bosom, not even letting me guess such a state of affairs.” She nodded, and he resumed, “And now, after meeting again, years later, and being thrown much together,—you believe the old infatuation for me is taking possession of you,

and you are cherishing hopes that we might—marry. Is not this the way matters stand—in your mind?"

Marcelle burst into tears, dropping her head on his shoulder.

"Yes, that is the way of it, Daniel dear," she murmured.

For a long time he remained silent;—so long that she was in great fear they would reach the hotel before the matter was settled.

Then he turned to her slowly, solemnly.

"I know only too well what it is to be the victim of unrequited love," he said, more to himself than to her. "I therefore pity from the bottom of my heart, any one who has known that sorrow.

"My life is a blasted one, Mrs. Rae,—and I have no affection to offer, but, if you think you will be contented with that, and are sure you would care to be Mrs. Winslow, I do not know but what it could be arranged."

"Oh, Daniel, I accept you, and believe me when I tell you that in becoming your wife, you will make me the happiest woman the world holds. You have raised me in this moment from the depths of misery and loneliness, to a heaven on earth of joyousness."

He was sorry the next instant after he had uttered the words, but there was no help for it now. He was now betrothed to the beautiful woman at his side. He could not escape; he felt that she had set a silken net for him, and he had blundered right into it, and she had drawn the cords tightly about him. He wished in that moment that he could warn all men of the dan-

ger of taking lonely rides with fascinating women—especially widows, who had matrimonial designs upon them. The shrewdest man in the world is no match for such a woman.

They were betrothed, with the marriage to take place when his business was finished there, and he was ready to go back to the Klondike;—yet,—despite this, Marcelle saw less of Daniel than she did before. Each day she made especial toilettes to go down to the grand dining room for luncheon, expecting to see him, but he was never there.

“Where do you get your luncheons, Daniel?” she queried curiously at length, to which he replied, “Wherever I happen to be.” This was true as far as it went; he did not think it worth while to inform her that he generally managed to be around a restaurant down town about noon, where he ran across a certain little cross-sweep who never missed an invitation to “feed with him.”

On two occasions Marcelle had come across Daniel talking to the boy on the street, and again, to her surprise, the same dirty little urchin was seated beside him on a bench in the park.

One of the ladies who had made Marcelle’s acquaintance in the hotel, remarked to her, “I often see Mr. Weslow with that lad; he seems greatly interested in him. Marcelle scarcely knew why, but she found herself growing insanely jealous of the cross-sweep.

A second time she came across them sitting in the park; she passed closely behind them, but Daniel did not even see her.

“Let’s play you are my daddy, and I am your little boy,” the lad was saying,—to which nonsense Daniel replied hilariously:—“De-lighted!”

“An’ you must come to my house, and tell Muzzy that I am your little boy as well as her’s an——”

Marcelle restrained herself by the greatest effort from stepping forward and giving the audacious child a sound boxing on the ears.

Appearing suddenly before them, she said sweetly to Daniel, “Ah, what a glorious afternoon it is; we will have a stroll through this beautiful park.” Daniel arose at once, agreeing, exclaiming, “Good-bye for today, my little man.” The child did not answer, much to Daniel’s surprise, for he had always found him a great little chatter-box.

The truth was, as Daniel momentarily turned his back, and she was sure of not being detected, Marcelle gave the lad such a scowl of rage, fairly grinding her teeth at him, that the boy shrank back in abject terror, fleeing in fright, as fast as his little legs could carry him, but stopping at a safe distance now and then to look back at them.

“What a tough looking youngster! He looks as though he might be one of the young pick-pockets I’ve been reading about, who infest this city,” remarked Marcelle, carelessly.

To her surprise Daniel took it up with alacrity. “I do not agree with you, Marcelle; that’s as fine a little fellow as I ever set eyes on; you do not know what a nice chap he really is;—quite a character; it’s a pity Dickens did not run across him—he would have made him famous,—just as sure as you live.”

“I do not believe he is anywhere as young as you think; no doubt he is years older, and as shrewd as a fox; didn’t you hear him try to inveigle you to where his mother was?—she makes the balls, and the boy fires ’em.”

Daniel Weslow laughed long and loud. “I know an innocent boy when I talk to one,” he declared, “and that youngster is as sweet and free from guile as a babe in a nursery.”

“He has played upon your sympathies, but I see through him, and I tell you to watch out for him, Daniel,” insisted Marcelle.

“All right!” he answered to mollify her, but that did not change in the least his good opinion of the little lad whom he thought the more of, every time he saw, or spoke to him. During the next few days he saw little of the youngster at close quarters,—Daniel was surprised at himself that he missed the boy’s company as much as he did.

He knew, however, that little Paul was close at his heels, for, go where he would, be talking or walking with whom he might,—if he chanced to look around suddenly, he saw the boy peeping at him from around the nearest corner,—suddenly disappearing when he found he had been discovered.

“The lad has certainly taken to me,” he mused, more pleased than otherwise, that he had found the boy always hovering near him.

There was one thing upon which he had made up his mind, and that was to visit his people and make them the offer to educate little Paul, if they would permit

him to do so. Somehow, he could not bear the thought that, otherwise, the boy might grow up amidst the poor surroundings in which he now lived, content to be a long-shore-man, or a stoker,—or follow any of the callings open to such a life,—even tho he did stoutly declare, when he grew up to be a big, big man, he wanted to be a Senator. It was indeed a strange notion for a lad in his position.

The lad seemed to fear to come near him again, or possibly there was jealousy in his little heart—to see him in company of a lady.

Meanwhile, his mother, and Grandma Carey, were learning about the big, fine gentleman who had sent the food, and was continuing to be so good to Paul.

His mother talked it over with Grandma, wondering what it all meant, and was beginning to grow alarmed.

“Perhaps he is a movie man, and, noticing how clever my little boy is,—has notions of securing him for one of those screen pictures; I will veto any such idea at once.”

Despite their questionings, they could not learn that the nice gentleman had even mentioned—pictures—to little Paul,—though he had told him that he should like to do great things for him.

To their surprise, the boy cried most bitterly when he was forbidden to go near his new-found friend again. They were alarmed when he said:—

“I love him next to you, Muzzy! Even better’n Grandma.”

He did not think of disobeying;—but that was why he kept away from Daniel, though keeping close at his

heels,—peering at him from around corners,—wiping the tears from his eyes with his sleeve.

Daniel Winslow became so troubled over this, that he determined to talk to little Paul about it. He had been unwise in mentioning this state of affairs, concerning the boy, to Marcelle; he received cold comfort from her.

“As I told you, the boy did not care a rap for you, but was a most clever pretender, and fakir,” she declared. “They noticed you were rarely alone now,—and that I am usually with you, and concluded they had best leave you alone.”

He was loath to believe this explanation of the boy's avoidance of him. Instead of letting matters go at that, he found himself actually worrying, and downhearted over the estrangement that had taken place between the lad and himself.

Marcelle was well pleased over it, for she was becoming actually alarmed over the influence this strange little cross-sweep had exerted over Daniel Weslow. He seemed never pleased except when relating to her something that boy had said, or done, which he considered unusually clever and was actually annoyed when she did not coincide with him.

Marcelle concluded she would never know—peace—until she was married to Daniel,—and was far away from San Francisco,—and this boy.

Daniel concluded not to tell Marcelle—until he had to,—of the plan so dear to his heart,—of doing handsomely by—Little Paul.

CHAPTER XXII

EVERY HEART YEARNs FOR LOVE

“Ah, they know not, heart of man or woman who declare
That love needs time to woo with care!
His altars wait not day nor name—
Only the touch of sacred flame.”

MARCELLE was becoming more alarmed each day over the inroads this strange little cross-sweep, or news-boy, —which ever he chose to call himself, was making in the affections of Daniel Weslow. “I shall have to put a stop to it in some way, she decided. Her opportunity came sooner than she expected.

Some few days later, when she and Daniel were out for a walk one afternoon, quite by accident they came across the boy, eagerly plying his little broom, sweeping the dust from the crossings, at one of the great stores,—where the women shoppers alighted from their automobiles.

Many were wont to toss him a penny, or bit of small change;—more often he received nothing whatever for preserving the cleanliness of the dainty foot-gear.

As Marcelle expected, Daniel sighted him at once, and with unmistakable joy. “There is little Paul!” he exclaimed;—“I feared he was ill!”

The boy looked equally as delighted, to catch a sight of Daniel. For the instant, his mother’s warnings, and command were completely forgotten;—Down went the broom, and with a bound he was at Weslow’s side.

“Well, how are you, my little man!” said Daniel genially, “I am right glad to see you, sonny.”

“And I’m so glad to see *you*, daddy!” murmured the child, tears of gladness filling his large, beautiful blue eyes, “I was lonesome for you!”

Daddy! Sonny! So they were as intimate as all that! Marcelle’s eyes fairly gleamed with rage;—she was beside herself with fury.

“Here is our little laddy, whom I so feared was ill, and was just about to hunt up,—looking as bright and sparkling as the sunshine about us!” laughed Weslow.

At that instant little Paul caught sight of Daniel’s companion,—and the gladness quickly gave way to an expression of great terror:—He clung to Daniel’s hand, whispering in affright:—“You wont let her hit me, will you!”—Oh, oh, daddy!—you wont—will you!”

“What a notion!” laughed Weslow, laying his hand on the boy’s shoulder. “Of course the lady will not harm you;—why, she is quite as fond of you as I am, I’m sure.”

The lad’s intuition told him better; he felt that the beautiful lady who stood by the side of the fine man whom he loved,—was his enemy.

Marcelle had passed on impatiently a few steps; Daniel was obliged to follow her; he paused long enough to say:—“I’ll be around at the same eating place—where I always give you a good feed,—in the course of an hour, or so, sonny.” With those words, and flinging back a smile, Daniel passed on, joining his companion. In that moment in which he had been parting from the lad, Marcelle’s brain had concocted a daring thought.

She was scarcely ten feet from the boy,—there was not a person in sight.—Quickly she flung the small gold purse she had been carrying in her hand, backward. It fell at little Paul's feet; his attention at that instant had been directed in another direction. He saw the glittering thing fall at his feet, but had no knowledge from whence it came.

He did what any other child the world over, at his age, would have done,—stooped down, picked it up, and opened it,—looking with wide opened—wondering eyes at the bills, and pieces of yellow gold it contained.

He quite thought it had dropped from the blue skies for him, in answer to his oft repeated prayer—to send him some money to buy some medicine for his mother who was ill at home.

Marcelle stopped short, exclaiming “Oh, Daniel!—my—little gold purse—has been stolen!—snatched!”

“When did you discover you hadn't it!” queried Daniel solicitously.

She made him no answer, but, looking backward, screamed out—pointing her finger at little Paul,—“Look, Daniel! *he* has it; don't you see it in his hand!—I *told* you he was a clever rogue!—a thief!—I—felt something being snatched from my hand as he slipped by me. You must call the police, and have him arrested at once,—or—I shall!”

Daniel Weslow's face had grown very white; he was greatly moved. “Marcelle,” he said earnestly, “that little kid wouldn't steal,—he's as honest as the sun! I'd stake my life on it.”

“How can you say such a thing when you see it in

his hands—and also see him foraging through its contents.”

“He will tell you, as I do, that he never thought of stealing it!” insisted Weslow, greatly disturbed. “He’s such a little fellow he doesn’t know what stealing means.”

Marcelle’s fury grew apace, to see him standing there defending the boy.

“Which are you going to believe,—your affianced wife—or that thing!”

“Come, let us go back, and he will give it to you, telling us how he came by it. I shall believe what he says,” declared Daniel resolutely.

“You must not be taken in by any of his lies, if he should tell the glib story—I dropped it,” she said bitterly.

“I imagine that must have been the way of it,” admitted Daniel frankly.

“Did you see him run after me to return it to me?—ask yourself that!” she snapped sharply, adding:—

“I command you to cause his arrest here and now, Daniel; it is no more than right;—you are too just a man to aid in covering up—a felony. Once a thief, always a thief, depend on it.”

Daniel walked slowly back to where little Paul stood, eagerly examining the contents of the pretty purse,—Marcelle following.

“Where did you get it, sonny,” he asked kindly, his voice sounded strained and hard, even to his own ears. The boy looked up at him with a smile.

“I just wanted some money—an’ th’ fairies dropped

it at my feet," he answered promptly and joyously, with no trace of guilt on his face.

"The lady dropped it, but I suppose you did not see that, did you Sonny?"

All the gladness died out of the childish face. "Then it wasn't th' fairies?" he exclaimed disappointedly. Daniel shook his head.

The harshest laugh that was ever heard broke from Marcelle's lips.

She snatched the purse from the child's hand, exclaiming shrilly:—"You have a champion in the man I am to marry;—that is all that saves you from the consequences of your sinful act!" Turning to Daniel, she said:—"We will go on, please, after you have obeyed my command to you—to see this thing through by bringing that little thief to justice."

"Your—command!" retorted Daniel. "You haven't got as far as commanding me, Mrs. Rae, just remember that!—we are not married yet."

She saw she had gone a step too far, she had aroused his antagonism. "Please escort me to the hotel, Daniel," she said.

He saw the boy looking from the one to the other in puzzled wonder and doubt; he smiled down at him with an effort, murmuring:—"It's quite all right, sonny, I believe you;—you didn't know who it belonged to—there won't be any more about it."

Without another word, he took Marcelle's arm, half leading, half dragging her away. The boy watched in puzzled wonder until they were out of sight. He could not quite understand what it all meant.

In utter silence Daniel and Marcelle proceeded to the hotel.

“Wont you come in for afternoon tea, Daniel?” she queried.

He shook his head, saying he had a business engagement which would detain him for the next hour or so; that the gentleman whom he was to meet, must be awaiting him in his office. He parted from her more coolly than he had ever done since they had become betrothed.

“I did well to have the engagement published, also the date set for our marriage;—otherwise, I verily believe Daniel Weslow would attempt to squirm out of it,—and all on account of this affair today with that nasty little street beggar. To save my life I cannot understand how it is that he has taken to that boy as he has,” she ruminated.

As she thought it over, Marcelle’s rage over it got the better of her;—then she made the crowning mistake of her life, acting on a sudden impulse. Donning her wraps quickly again, and calling a taxi, she was soon at the place little Paul was so industriously sweeping the walk.

Calling a policeman she pointed to him, saying:—

“Officer, I want that boy placed under arrest as a thief. I dropped my purse,—er he snatched it, I do not know which; looking back I saw it in his hands;—he was eagerly counting the money in it;—I find he has extracted over half of the money it contained.”

A moment later, to little Paul’s dismay, a very big policeman grabbed him by the back of the neck,—dragging him along with him. All he heard was “Arrest”

and "Station-house!" He saw the beautiful lady who had been with his hero,—daddy,—following them. She advanced to the desk, the Sergeant in command, taking her complaint. He heard them say something about the Children's Night Court; then he was hustled into a rear room where a number of tough boys were congregated, and the great iron door swung to after him with a bang, and a grating key turned in the lock.

The tough boys greeted little Paul's advent among them with laughter and jeers. They pushed and hauled, pinched, and tortured the child, hilarious over his fright and tears. When they grew tired of their one-sided sport,—they found the fragile, timid lad had swooned.

"He'll come to in time to get tried,—and either be discharged if they can't prove nothin' agin him,—or get his ticket for th' reformatory," they agreed.

Then, leaving the unconscious child huddled up in a corner, forgot him in discussing their own grievances.

The guard, passing to and fro had not paused long enough, in glancing in to note the cause of their hilariousness, which suddenly ceased as he made his appearance—not to be resumed until he was out of hearing.

Meanwhile, in his humble home, there was great worryment and anxiety when he did not return. His mother was just coming down with the grippe, for that reason Granny dared not let her know of his absence.

The sun went down and the cool dusk of the evening crept up, still he did not come. Had he met with an accident! "God in Heaven forbid!" sobbed the poor old woman wringing her wrinkled old hands as she

peered from the window into the darkness. She was glad beyond words that his poor mother had dropped off into a deep slumber.

At last Grandma Carey decided she could endure the anxiety no longer; she must go out to search for him. She went up one street after the other, calling his name, and peering into every alley. There was no response. At length, the poor old soul, who was nearly blind, bumped full into a gentleman who was advancing swiftly around the corner.

“Paul, Little Paul,” she sobbed, “where are you, that you do not hear poor old Grandma calling you, dearie! Oh, God! he does *not answer*,—what could have happened to our darling little boy!”

The gentleman, who was Daniel Weslow, stopped short, exclaiming:—“What is the matter, my good woman? You seem in trouble! Can I aid you in any way? For whom are you searching?”

In broken sobs, the tears falling like rain down her wrinkled face, she explained that she was searching for little Paul, the cross-sweep, who had never failed to come home before,—but was no where to be found now.

A cold hand, with the chill of death upon it, seemed to grip Daniel Weslow’s heart. “Little Paul—the urchin with the flaxen curls clustering about his baby face!” Lost! Great Heaven! How could it have happened. Then, all at once he remembered the episode of the purse that afternoon—and the accusation of Marcelle, to the boy’s face—that he had stolen it. He had not gone home; many a lad, even as young as

Little Paul had so grieved over a false accusation that they had ended their own existence;—their hearts had broken; they had died of grief.

“He shall be found within the hour,” cried Weslow, excitedly. “I shall set the entire machinery of the police force at work without delay to accomplish it. I know your little Grandson well,—and am so fond of him—that if anything has happened to injure him—I will never get over it; it would darken my life;—I—I—love—that little boy—Paul!”

At this point, a policeman, swinging his night-stick, hove leisurely in sight. Of him Weslow inquired the way to the nearest police station,—stating his object. The man, who happened to be the one who had arrested the boy,—and who knew the multi-millionaire, by sight, who was talking to him, looked considerably perturbed.

“Step this way, sir, so that the old woman may not hear, and I will tell you where to look for the little Cross-sweep,” he said.

Daniel obeyed with alacrity.

“It’s just this way, sir—we’re here to do our duty——”

“Well, well, what of the boy?” questioned Daniel, having a faint inkling of what was coming, “Speak quickly, man.”

“I was ordered by a lady, sir, to arrest the boy for stealing,—which I did, the lady following to lodge the complaint. He is in the Children’s Night Court. His case ought to be called very soon now.”

The policeman was actually frightened at the

mighty wrath this information evoked from the great millionaire. He turned to the old woman who stood a little way off, and had not heard the low whispered words,—“Go home,” he said, “and, within the hour I will have your little boy safe in your arms, and in his mother’s. Tell her that for me. I pledge myself to do so.”

With long, swinging strides Weslow made his way quickly to the police court in question. He was recognized at once by the sergeant at the desk, who was only too pleased to give him full information concerning the case. His anger knew no bounds when he discovered that it was Marcelle who had lodged the complaint;—and that it looked dark for the boy—the lady’s word against the lad’s,—and very much as though the intention was to railroad him to the reformatory. The lady had hinted strongly that such a course was the only one which appeared to her as feasible.

The Sergeant would have been glad to have obliged the millionaire by discharging the boy at once, but—the rules of the Court had to be enforced. He must await his turn to be tried—and his case decided upon.

“The lady said she would be here to press the case,” said the sergeant. He saw Weslow’s brow grow dark and stormy,—and wondered how the affair was to end.

“I will sit here until she arrives,” Weslow announced, clenching his hands tightly together.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN THE HEART YEARNS FOR THE LOVE OF A LITTLE CHILD

“My dear and only love, I pray,
Be governed by no other sway
Than thy good judgment;
For, if confusion have a part
Which noble souls abhor
And hold a council in thy heart,
I'll never love thee more.”

ALTHOUGH Daniel Weslow watched and waited in the Children's Night Court in grim silence, as case after case was disposed of, Marcelle did not put in an appearance. The truth of the matter was,—she had arrived in a taxi at the door of the station house just as the huge clock on its wall pointed to the hour of eight. As the cab stopped, and ere she had time to alight, looking through the window, she beheld Daniel sitting within.

At the first glance at his set, stony face, she realized he was there to battle for the boy, let the finish be what it might.

The chauffeur stepped down to open the door. “I have concluded not to stop;—back to the hotel,” she ordered.

The fourth case called was little Paul's. To see the trembling lad in the grasp of the burly officer, brought Daniel to his feet with a bound.

He could scarcely restrain the impulse to rush forward and take him from the officer. He clenched the back of a chair tightly, and waited.

Little Paul, still shaking with terror, had not as yet discovered his presence. The sergeant was obliged to lean forward, and peer over his desk to see the little fellow, and hear his piping voice. He had had much experience with criminals of all ages, and guilt in every phase. He was able to detect innocence, sifting the wheat from the chaff.

He looked down kindly at the little boy, and something very like a tear gathered in his eyes which were always noted for their cold, merciless glare which always caused the most hardened offenders to quail.

He asked the few questions, gently, of little Paul; as there was no one on hand to press the charge,—he was honorably discharged.

Daniel stepped forward. At that instant the boy caught sight of him, and with a piteous little cry that those who heard it never forgot, he bounded into his arms, sobbing:—"Oh, Daddy!—Daddy!"

Daniel Weslow was too overcome to utter a single word. He sank down in the nearest chair, holding the lad close to his throbbing heart, his shaking hand stroking little Paul's curly head,—his tear-stained cheeks and the little fingers, clutching his own so tightly.

"It's all right, sonny," he whispered soothingly, "You're going to come right along with me; I'll take you straight home to your ma."

The court attaches who witnessed the scene between the great multi-millionaire, garbed so immaculately, and

the dusty, tousled boy whom he was fondling with such great tenderness, nodded to each other, the one whispering to the other:—"Did you ever see th' like o' that!" others remarked, "There's a fortune ahead o' that kid, believe me; no one can tell where the fancy of these great men may strike."

All unmindful of the attention he was attracting,—and that there were newspaper reporters present who might make a great story out of it for their papers, Daniel continued to soothe the boy who had been almost hysterical,—ending by calling a taxi,—placing the lad in it, and springing in after him.

Grandma Carey stood at the window, watching and crying. She could scarcely believe her senses, when she beheld Little Paul being lifted out of a cab in front of their door, by the fine gentleman who had assured her an hour before, that he would find the boy, and restore him to his mother and her.

Daniel bore him in his arms up the three flights of stairs to the humble little rooms at the top of the house.

Grandma Carey opened the door softly, holding her finger to her lips. She received the boy from him with tears and passionate kisses, yet—holding her finger over little Paul's lips, whispering:—Sh!—sh! your ma is sleeping; we mustn't awake her."

She tried to thank the gentleman for his great kindness in finding and restoring little Paul to them; still Daniel lingered.

"It looks to me—as though he was—in a fever," he whispered, taking the boy's hand. "Don't you think

it would be advisable for me to fetch a doctor for him?"

Grandma Carey bent down and looked at the child, drawing back with a sob on her lips. "Yes! yes! he is ill—very ill!" she moaned, wringing her wrinkled, feeble old hands. "Oh, Little Paul!—Little Paul!"

"Put him to bed,—I will return as quickly as possible with a physician."

Ere she could utter one word of gratitude he was out of the room, bounding down the stairs three steps at a time, was into the taxi, and off.

At the nearest drug store he leaped out, inquiring the name of the very best doctor in the city. The druggist pointed to a gentleman who was just leaving the place. As he turned about, on hearing his name called, Daniel discovered, to his intense joy, that he was a man who had lived in his early youth, on a ranch out in Oklahoma. He had known him well. The recognition was mutual. He turned and retraced his steps.

"I am now—Dr. John King—of San Francisco," he announced. "Is there anything I can do for you, Daniel?"

"Yes, John!" returned Weslow, huskily, "you can come with me quickly, and—save the life of—a little boy." In a few words he explained the nature of the trouble. Dr. King's face looked very grave as he examined Little Paul. "We have taken hold of him just in time. I think I will have him removed—to the hospital."

To this Grandma Carey put up such a piteous pro-

test, that he and Daniel looked at each other in troubled silence.

“Let me keep him here, in his own home, doctor,” she sobbed. “I will work day and night to do everything for him, only let us keep him here; don’t send him out to strangers—to whom it does not matter whether he lives or dies;—he will live—under *my* care.”

“Let it be as she says,” whispered Daniel huskily. “Tomorrow I will see that a trained nurse is installed—leave that to me.”

After administering the proper medicine, and being obliged to leave to attend to an urgent call, and promising to look in early the next morning, Dr. King took his leave.

“I suppose you will be going soon, sir,” said Grandma Carey, “and I want to tell you how grateful I am to you—but words—fail me.”

“You have no need to thank me,” returned Daniel, adding:—“With your permission, I will sit here, beside little Paul until morning; I think—somehow,—he will rest easier, if he knows—I am here; go to your bed, my good woman, you will need rest; I assure you most solemnly that I will be as faithful in my watch-care over the boy, as though he were my very own.”

The poor old soul demurred, Daniel insisted, and, reluctantly she left them alone together, wondering if she were doing right,—but she was tired—so very—very tired, and the aged—are weak.”

All through the hours of the long night Daniel Weslow sat by the bedside, holding one of the feverish lit-

tle hands in his, and with his disengaged one, smoothing the little sufferer's pillow. Twice during the night Little Paul awakened in afright, shrilling out:—"Are you there,—daddy?" to which Daniel made answer, as he pressed his fluttering little hand:—"Right here, Sonny."

"And you—won't—go—away!" asked the boy, tightening his hold.

"I'm going to stay just as long as you want me to," reassured Daniel.

"I want you to stay forever!" decided little Paul, taking a firmer hold of Daniel's hand with both of his own.

Again, a little later the white eyelids flew open quickly in fear,—which gave place to a smile of comfort as he saw Daniel there.

"I'm right on the job, Sonny," he commented. "Go right to sleep again,—Daddy'll be right here when you wake up."

The half candle in the candle-stick burned slowly to the socket,—spluttered, and went out,—leaving the room in total darkness; still Daniel Weslow kept his lonely vigil. In those hours of desolation, he prayed to his God to save the life of this boy, who had crept into his heart and nestled there—to remain enshrined in his heart as long as he should live. Yes, he loved the lad,—loved him as he had never loved any human being in all his lonely life before.

He looked at the faint pink ribbons of light that pierced the eastern sky, heralding the birth of a new born day, with wistful eagerness. The early morning

brought Dr. King again. He was astounded to find Daniel Weslow still sitting there, holding the boy's hand, realizing he had kept vigil all night.

"You must save this boy if it is within human power, doctor," he said, "spare no pains—or expense; let everything be done for him."

Dr. King nodded assent; he was greatly perplexed over the great interest his old friend,—who had since become a great multi-millionaire, took in this little waif and stray of Crow's Alley.

"You must go back to your hotel and rest, Weslow," he commanded, or I shall have another patient on my hands." Very reluctantly, Daniel allowed himself to be persuaded to leave the boy's bedside.

When Marcelle met him in the breakfast room of the hotel an hour later, she was amazed at the change in him; he looked as though long years had passed over his head. His greeting to her was cold and constrained; she felt it keenly, but knew better than to take notice of it.

"Could you spare an hour, Daniel, to ride around the park?" she asked.

"No, I am due right now, at the bedside of—a dear—sick friend?" he said.

Marcelle was sure his next remark would be concerning the little cross-sweep, and that a bitter quarrel between them would result from it.

This in all probability would have been the case, but for the opportune entrance of a gentleman who appeared to be a warm friend of Daniel's—but whom he evidently did not care to introduce to her, therefore,

saying she would wait for him to call her up later, she left the breakfast room—which was certainly a relief to Daniel.

The gentleman was Doctor King. “I just dropped in for a moment, in passing, to report to you our little patient is progressing famously,” he said. “I have just left the lad;—the danger of developing fever has passed, thanks to your faithful carrying out my orders in giving the medicine on the minute, and so forth. He will mend rapidly now, and be quite himself in the course of a fortnight. Fresh air, and sunshine will do more than we doctors can for him.”

Weslow was deeply agitated as he grasped the doctor’s hand; all he could say was a fervent:—“Thank God—and you!” As soon as he could gain anything like composure, he said eagerly:—“I shall see that he has plenty of air and sunshine;—I will get an automobile at once and take him out myself all day long through the park.”

Dr. King laid a hand on Daniel’s shoulder, saying:—“You mean the best in the world, Weslow,—but, let me advise you to stop and think for a moment—using the good sense you have always been credited with having. This boy has never been used to the luxury you would force upon him;—it would set a pace for an extravagance he could never know again. It would cause dissatisfaction with his lot in life;—and might be the means of making a rogue out of a now innocent boy—to procure, and enjoy what he could never come by honestly. No, no, Daniel,—let his two little sturdy legs carry him around in the air,

and the sunshine; that will bring about the speediest, safest cure."

"You are doubtless—right." Daniel was forced to admit.

"I will look in upon the little fellow as often as I can today, but shall be pretty well tied up on account of the Physician's Convention here, this week. I have one of the visiting doctors waiting now, outside for me. By the way, he was one of the consulting physicians who was called in to see you when you were stricken in your home in Washington, some few years ago, he tells me;—he would be glad to see you again, Weslow."

"And I shall be equally glad to see him," returned Weslow promptly.

They repaired at once to the smoking room where the stranger was awaiting Dr. King. Daniel remembered Doctor Northby's face at once.

They shook hands cordially, all three sitting down to enjoy a smoke together. "Dr. Northby is stopping with me, while in Frisco, at my bachelor quarters—I want him to see as much of the city and suburbs as possible. Many of the doctors have brought their good wives along, which lets me out of being host to more of them."

"Our friendship dates back to the time we studied physics together. I own I was somewhat surprised to find my genial friend—still single;—and what is more," he added, "he assures me, up to this time of his life, he has never yet had a single heart affair."

"I think I can vouch for that," said Weslow through a cloud of smoke.

“But what about yourself!” queried King, turning the tables on Doctor Northby. “How does it happen that you are also heart whole, and fancy free?”

“It isn’t of my own accord,” smiled Northby. “I had a love affair about seven years ago,—but it was a one sided romance. I went on a fortnight’s visit to my sister;—there I met a beautiful but unfortunate—girl. I asked her to become my wife. At that juncture I was called away. I gave her a week to consider it. When I returned—she had gone away, leaving no address.—I did my best to locate her—but failed. She was my first love—and will be my last.”

Turning to Weslow, Dr. King asked:—

“You have never seen the mother of that little boy, Paul, I believe. I have,—and let me tell you, despite her great poverty, privations, and hard work, she is as refined, and lovely a young woman as I ever saw. I am sure she has seen better days; she is a lady to the manner born.”

Dr. Northby smiled to Weslow and nodded toward King. “He is on the rim of a romance—*now*,—I should say. He has become interested in the sick-boy’s mother. Pity is usually the fore-runner of love.”

Daniel Weslow was startled. He had not dreamed of such a contingency. If Dr. King wooed, and won the mother, he would not want to encourage the lad’s affection for himself. He would want little Paul to call—HIM—daddy.

During the entire morning this phase of the case troubled him; he could not put it out of his mind. Promptly he sought a solution of the impending difficulty, putting it into execution without delay.

Repairing at once to the office of his lawyer,—he laid the case before him. On the first day of his arrival he had bought a paper of a little newsboy,—seeing and chatting with the urchin each day since. The boy, who was the child of a woman so poor she scarcely knew from day to day where her next meal was to come from,—had grown fond of him, the esteem being mutual;—in short, to state the object of his visit to the lawyer,—he wished to adopt the lad Paul Weis.

“No matter how poor many a mother is, she will cling to her offspring,” remarked the attorney slowly.

“I will make it a great—money—object!” declared Daniel. “I want you to go to her, and fix it up for me.”

“I will do my utmost to secure what you want, but mind, I do not—promise success will crown my undertaking. I would suggest that in all probability *you* would make a better job of it by going to the mother and pleading *your own* cause. You were a Senator once, and a mighty good one, I remember. Use the same degree of eloquence you used to put your bills through at that time,—and you ought to be able to convince the poor woman that it would be the best thing that could happen to the lad—to permit you to adopt him. Why, it would be a wonderful thing for the boy, as she should realize.”

“I—put it in your hands—entirely,” declared Daniel.

“I will report to you sometime this afternoon,” replied Lawyer Kirby.

CHAPTER XXIV

CHOOSING BETWEEN THEM

“Love, sole lord and monarch of itself
Allows no ties, no dictates but its own
To that mysterious arbitrary power
Reason points out, and duty pleads in vain.”

LAWYER Kirby lost no time in presenting himself at the home of the lad in whom his multi-millionaire client felt such a deep interest. He would not have gone personally to Crows Alley, and toiled up to the top floor for any one save Daniel Weslow. Grandma Carey answered his knock, courtesying profoundly when she beheld a fine looking gentleman standing there.

She was quite dumbfounded when he entered, seating himself, and without preliminary, stated his errand.

As usual, the poor old lady got things mixed. She understood that it was a Mr. Kirby who wanted to adopt little Paul.—Mr. Kirby, the boy's new-found friend of whom he was so exceedingly fond.

At the other end of the short hall, Pauline, tossing feverishly on her pillow, heard, through the door which was ajar, snatches of their conversation.

Through her befogged brain came the realization—a man was there who was asking—to adopt her little boy Paul.

She cried out: “*No! no! no!*” with all her strength,

but he had not heard,—he did not heed. She heard him explaining to Grandma what a wonderful thing it would be for the boy;—the opportunity of his life.

He had said all there was to be said. Argued the case as he had never argued, even for a client's life—before Judge and jury.

He desired to see the boy's mother, to talk it over with her. Grandma was sorry,—but the doctor had said she must see no one. He was obliged to leave the matter in the old lady's hands, returning for his answer the following day. Grandma had given her promise that she would do every thing in her power to further his wishes.

Taking a bill from his pocket he pressed it upon her, remarking that if Mrs. Weis consented to the adoption, it would mean a decided change for the better, for both women.

Running to the window to look after him, when he had departed, she saw a fine automobile in waiting, which he hastily entered.

Then, quickly as her old limbs would carry her, she sought Lena, with the news, Mr. Kirby,—that was the name of the new-found friend of little Paul,—wished—**TO—ADOPT HIM!**”

“I heard most of what he said!” sobbed Lena, “but I tell you, Grandma it cannot be; I would as soon think of tearing out the living beating heart from my body, as giving up, my Paul! My only treasure! the one and only tie that binds me to life, and makes it worth living. No—no—no—!

Grandma, he *cannot* have my baby—! I have loved

him too long and well to part from him. He is my world, the light of my life, my all."

Her violent weeping frightened Grandma Carey, who had used all her arguments to secure a bright future for little Paul—as she saw it.

"It was quite useless. Send him away when he comes back for his answer," she sobbed. "He cannot have my boy; I would die without—little Paul."

"You may regret robbing your boy of his chance—all your after life," declared Grand-ma, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron. "Think what he will say to you when he grows up, and learns how you came between him and, a life from which all care and worry would have been lifted. Try to put yourself out of the consideration,—remembering you are—facing the great—vital question—What is best for your boy's future;—You hold his fate in your hands; will you consign him to a life of work, seeing him suffer perhaps long years, his back bent by the weight of his burden—or will you give him the joy and gladness and future prosperity wealth can procure for him? Remember, Paul *loves* Mr. Kirby—he even calls him—Daddy."

Pauline struggled up to a sitting posture in her bed, her eyes dilated with fright. "Don't you see how it is, Grandma," she whispered hoarsely,—this stranger possesses a dire influence over my child;—as sure as you and I both live—he has—mesmerized my—little—Paul!"

Grandma shook her head. "He is too fine a man to do anything of that kind, Lena," she said reprovingly. "He is willing for you to examine and have every proof

you require that his credentials are genuine. Think of it!—he is willing to make over a fortune to the boy, the moment the adoption papers are signed;—and what is more, he said he would see to it that little—Paul’s mother—and even I—should never know want for the rest of our days. I ask you, Lena, would he do all this if he meant harm to the boy?—No—he—*LOVES*—your little Son.”

“He is more to me than anything else in the world, I tell you!”

“Why not let little Paul, himself, decide it,” suggested Grandma.

Without waiting for Lena’s consent, she hurried to the boy’s room, bringing him to her.

It would have brought tears to the hardest eyes to have seen the hapless mother catch Paul in her arms, strain him to her bosom, cuddling and weeping over him, and sobbing out that she could not be parted from him.

“What are you crying for, Muzzy!” he demanded quite as soon as he could catch his breath. “If you cry, I will cry too!”

She caught his flushed cheeks between the palms of her hands and kissed him tumultuously;—kissed his curling yellow hair, his eyes, and his little hands, sobbing out to Grandma that “it was useless, she could never let him leave here. They would live their lives together for each other—and God would be merciful and let them—die together.”

Grandma was forced at last to intercede, and explain

as best she could the cause of his mother's agitation, to the lad.

"It's about the gentleman—who sat by your bed-side and held your hand all the long night through, Paul," she faltered.

"About—Daddy!" cried the child joyously. "Oh, isn't he coming to see me to-day? How I wish, and wish, and wish—he were here!"

Grandma and his mother exchanged meaning glances. —Lina had grown very white;—she strained the boy more convulsively still to her throbbing heart, her pallid lips twitching—but no sound coming from them.

"Do you love him, sweetheart?" queried Grandma, anxiously.

"Yes!" replied the boy promptly, "I don't know which I love most—Muzzy—or—Daddy. Oh, I want him to come, I want—Daddy!"

It was God's voice calling through the child's heart.

His mother fell back on her pillow, her lips quivering piteously. Grandma thought for a moment that she was dying!—that little Paul's words had broken her sorely tried heart.

"Would you like to go away—a long way off from muzzy,—with the—gentleman?" queried Grandma in a voice freighted with tears.

"I'll go away with him—if he will bring Muzzy—along—an' an'—*you too*, Grandma," he replied bravely, and again his shrill little voice piped out eagerly:—"Oh, how I want—Daddy!—I love him, I want him!—I need him."

"I—am—answered!" moaned the unhappy mother,

“my boy loves and yearns to be with this stranger;—my little one—has decided—what shall be done.” Grandma carried him away, struggling, kicking, and calling for—Daddy! He never knew that his mother fell back on her pillow in a deep swoon.—Grandma was intensely frightened, she had so much difficulty in bringing her to.

Grandma did not mention to her that the boy had cried himself to sleep because the gentleman failed to put in an appearance.

Lawyer Kirby was well pleased, when he called the following day and learned there was hope that little Paul’s mother would think favorably of the proposition of the adoption of her son. She must have, however, a few days to make up her mind fully.

“Certainly, that was expected,” agreed the attorney. “I shall come some day this week, the latter part of it, for her final decision.” He asked particularly, that no word of this should be mentioned to anyone,—not even to the doctor who was still coming to see the boy’s mother.

Therefore, Doctor King wondered vaguely why it was that he found his patient so much worse—when he called later that day.

Meanwhile the attorney lost no time in communicating over the phone the result of his negotiations so far.

Daniel Weslow was beside himself with joy. Pacing up and down the length of his room, he murmured over and over again:—“If the good Lord is kind enough to give that dear little lamb into my keeping;—I will love and care for him as though he were my very own. As I deal by him, so may God deal with me.”

Marcelle was surprised at the smile on his face when he greeted her at the dinner table that evening.

“You look very happy, Daniel,” she remarked.

“I *am* very happy over something that is about to happen—soon, Marcelle.”

“You mean our marriage, dear,” she whispered. “I was wondering if you were remembering—it is little more than a week off.”

The light and brightness died out of his face. “I had indeed quite forgotten it was so near at hand,—it was not of that I was thinking.”

“What then?” she queried. “You must keep no secrets, you know, from the lady you are so soon to wed. Your joys shall be mine, Daniel dear.”

“I was just thinking that I ought to tell you about it,” he said—slowly, ponderingly.—“You would know soon anyhow;—well, my present—happiness is caused by anticipation of adopting, within the next few days,—Little Paul.”

If a bomb had suddenly burst in her face, Marcelle could not have been more shocked and enraged.

“Daniel!” she gasped, springing to her feet and facing him, despite the many diners in the room.—“You must not!—I protest against it! Surely I have every right to be consulted on a matter which jeopardizes the happiness of my future. You are surely insane, Daniel Weslow, to think, for an instant of adopting that miserable little brat.!”

“Stop!—not another word, Marcelle, or I shall leave the table and the room.—As I said on another occasion,—you are *not*—my wife—YET,—therefore, have no

right to dictate to me, as to what I shall,—or shall *not do*.—I'll adopt the boy while I am free, and able, and willing to do so. You had best not attempt to interfere. It will do no good;—perhaps,—harm. I tell you this:—No one save Almighty God can prevent me from making that little boy—mine—by adoption. I want him as I have never wanted,—longed for—anything in my life before. Nothing can thwart me. Now you know what I intend to do,—it is up to you entirely as to whether you and I marry—or—not.”

“You—you—would be satisfied—to break with me?” she panted, her eyes glowing like living coals of fire.

“I stand upon my right to refuse to answer,” he replied calmly.

“It is the cruelest indignity that was ever heaped on a woman, Daniel,” she cried chokingly. “I love you with all my heart and soul,—I—I—cannot bear the thought of sharing you with any human being on earth. Oh, my dear lover,—my husband so soon to be, let me plead with you to give up this mad notion about the strange little boy. Let me,—your Marcelle, be all in all to you. I will make you so happy you will never feel the craving for any other love. Let us make a truce:—hold off this adoption for six months after we are married; if you still insist, then,—I shall make no further effort to divert you from your purpose.”

“I have given my word, Marcelle; the papers are already being prepared—it must go forward;—speak no more of it;—I refuse to listen.”

There was that in his eyes which warned her not to say another word on the subject.—Once again, this boy

whom she already detested with the most intense hatred, had won a victory over her;—this was the crowning feat.

A little later Daniel called up the doctor to see if he might be permitted to sit up with his little friend, that night.

“Better not!” was the laughing reply over the phone. “Your presence seems to excite the little fellow too much. He will not lay down in his bed and go to sleep;—he wants to be cuddled up in your arms. He’s doing finely, let well enough alone. I’ll advise you when to pay your next call,—but let it be a day or so longer.”

As the second, and third day dragged their slow lengths by, and still he did not put in an appearance, little Paul began to call for him incessantly;—even in his sleep he would stir restlessly murmuring eagerly:—“Has Daddy come?”—I—want him so!”

Grandma became very much alarmed lest the doctor should hear, especially as she had been warned not to let anyone know, not even him.

The mother had been too ill to look over the papers and credentials the lawyer’s clerk had brought for her inspection, and Grandma’s eyes too dim to get head or tail of them, yet the clerk, too lazy to make another trip, gathered them up, making the report that both women had O.K’ed them.—“We may as well close the matter without further delay, then,” decided Lawyer Kirby.

Owing to the mother’s condition, the following morning, Dr. King concluded that it would be wisest and best to give her a soothing opiate,—to induce a few hours’ sleep. While she was still restless, but gradually giving

way to its soporific influence, the clerk brought the document for her to sign.

“On the dotted line, please,” he said thrusting the pen into her nervless fingers,—“sign there—Lena Weis.”

Mechanically she obeyed. The signature was straggling, as was Grandma’s who was requested to put her name down as witness. He had brought his notary’s seal with him, hurriedly affixing it.

“I’ll bet this will be worth a million of money to your little boy, ma’am. I congratulate him. There was never a more rapid rise from poverty to riches,” he said, pocketing the document. “Lawyer Barker requested me to say to you, if you are in need of immediate money,—you will please call upon him.”

Glancing at the mother, the clerk saw that she had not heard; she had trailed off into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WEB OF FATE

“I hold it true whate’er befall,
I feel it when I sorrow most—
’Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.”

It was the happiest moment Daniel Weslow had known for long years, when Lawyer Kirby announced to him over the phone “the Adoption paper had been duly signed.”—Little Paul was now his own. He could now make plans for him; he felt that he had now something to live for. A gleam of sunshine had stolen into his dark and lonely life;—then, like a dark cloud overspreading his happiness, came the thought of his approaching marriage to Marcelle.

He regretted his hasty proposal, a thousand times over; but, being a man of honor, he realized he must go on with it.—How happy he could have been,—with little Paul only. Marcelle did not like the lad,—that would mean that there would be constant friction between them, he could not endure that.

He concluded he must have an earnest talk with her at once to settle the situation. She must understand for all time, that, to win any deeper sentiment than kindness from him,—she must first win the liking, if not the love of—Little Paul.

In his exuberance of spirits, Daniel called up Dr.

King, acquainting him of the good news, inquiring when he would be permitted to see the lad.

The doctor was firm in his resolve that it must not be for a few days.

After receiving the news, Dr. King sat down in his office, giving himself up to his conflicting emotions. There was another angle to this affair that worried him considerably. He knew that Daniel Weslow, according to his own admission, had never seen the boy's mother;—only *he*, her doctor, was aware of her great beauty, her refinement, and grace. If Daniel were to behold her, he felt almost certain he would fall in love with her and want to marry her—for her own sake, independent of the great influence of the boy. At this turn of affairs, Dr. King suddenly woke up to the knowledge that he himself was deeply interested in Mrs. Weis. “Interested!” he muttered springing to his feet and pacing up and down the length of the office,—that is not the word that fits the case;—I am in LOVE with her—the only woman who has ever caused me an extravagant heart throb.

He decided the wisest thing to do, was to take time by the fore-lock by proposing marriage to the humble little widow—without delay.

He concluded too, that there was absolutely no use in letting Weslow hang around the place;—he would keep him away from the Weis home for a few days, and in the interim, his own affair would be settled. Putting on his hat he wended his way to the little home without delay.

He found little Paul's mother in a very excited state

of mind. As she made no reference to the adoption,—evidently not taking him into her confidence.—He did not allude to it in any way, or let her know that he knew about it.

She looked anxious as he entered:—"It was very good of you to call," she murmured,—“but, this must be your last visit;—I cannot afford the luxury of a physician longer; it is best to be frank with you. I am getting along slowly—but surely,—quite fit to resume my work, doctor.”

He took her little, worn hand in his, looking tenderly down at the fair spirituelle face, framed in its halo of golden hair, wondering how he should begin—to tell her that which he had come to say.

“I do not worry over that,” he declared earnestly. “No bill shall be sent you;—I am only too glad to have been able to render you and your little son any service in my power,—which has been entirely gratis, I assure you.”

She looked up at the kindly man in wonder. He went on:—"Every day of our lives we, doctors, are called to many places. To those who should be able to pay, we send bills, the others need have no worry over our visits;—I am still coming here—because,—well, I must be frank with you, —I am coming because—I find in *you* an attraction for me that no other woman whom I have ever met,—possessed. Pity for you awakened a deeper, more solemn sentiment in my heart.—The fact has been gradually dawning upon me—that I love you. Will you marry me Mrs. Weis?"

The sudden and unexpected proposal of marriage

from a man whom she had not scarcely given a second thought to, fairly took her breath away; she saw that he was deeply agitated, meaning every word he had uttered.

“I know this is very sudden,” he said, “and I do not expect you will give me my answer here and now;—that would be asking too much. Will you take a few days to consider it?”

She covered her face with her hands. He knew she was weeping;—he could see the tears trickling through the white fingers. “In two days, I shall come for my answer; should it be ready before that time, you know where to find me. I am leaving you, dearest of women, with a heart full of hope.”

With these words he was gone, leaving Pauline so stunned with astonishment she hardly knew if she had heard aright.

He looked in at the boy, as he went, declaring to Grandma, “he was fine and fit now, to get into the sunshine”; a decision which caused the lad the greatest of joy. After gaining his mother’s permission, Grandma buttoned him into his warmest little jacket, despite the fact that the day was mild, and sent him down to the street,—admonishing him, however, that he must not go far away from the door-step.

Once out in the sunshine again, the boy fell to thinking of—Daddy, and wondering if he would pass. There was a longing in his little heart to see him,—look up into his kindly face, feel the touch of his strong, but gentle hands. Suddenly a fear seized him. Daddy had spoken of going away—leaving the city

and going back to his home; had he gone without coming to say—Good-bye to him! Would the long years come and go—and he would never see him again? Great tears blinded Little Paul's eyes at the thought.

"I wouldn't want to get well and live—if I were never to see Daddy again," he sobbed, sighs welling up from the depths of his sore, troubled little heart.

At that self-same moment Marcelle was standing at her window in the hotel, looking moodily out at the sunshine. She had not heard him mention one word since, concerning the adoption papers, but she knew from his happy manner everything must be progressing favorably.

"That boy has come between Daniel and me," she ruminated, "I wonder if there is yet time to formulate some plan—to prevent it."

Standing here, a daring thought came to her.

"I wonder if it—could be carried out," she breathed excitedly. Her thoughts were interrupted at that moment by the entrance of a maid with fresh towels. Marcelle called to her.

"Do you know where—Crow's Alley is?" she inquired.

Oh yes, the girl knew—it was some blocks away, near the water front.

"I suppose it is inhabited by very rough people," commented Marcelle.

"No, lady, I can't say that!" replied the girl,—"it's mostly poor working people who live in those tenements; poor, but honest;—it gets its queer reputation—on account of its name—Crow's Alley."

“You probably know some of the people living there!” ventured Marcelle.

“Yes, a few of them,” she answered. “An old violin player whom, they said, had been very famous when he was in his prime, but now—no one wanted him, and he could scarcely find enough to do to keep body and soul together; he would accept no aid, though they did say many a day he was—hungry.”

She had talked glibly, but Marcelle had not been listening. She had not heard a word. Her attention was instantly arrested, when, among others the maid mentioned knowing a poor family on the top floor;—a poor old lace-mender, and her daughter and grandson.

“The daughter is a perfect lady,” went on the girl, adding:—“and she is as pretty as she is good; her little boy, a cross-sweep, who sells papers at odd times, is just the cutest, finest looking youngster you ever saw. They do say, a very rich gentleman who is stopping at this hotel is greatly taken with him. Wouldn’t it be strange—and romantic, ma’am, if the rich gent and the lace-mender’s daughter should meet, fall in love with each other—and marry?”

Marcelle paled to the lips in spite of her rouge. How strange that this maid—should put into words—the very thought that had been troubling her all day.

The girl noted she was interesting the lady, and went on:—“The little boy’s mother mends for this hotel. She has been doing some lace pieces which the housekeeper is anxiously waiting for. She has been ill, but is working away on them again—she will fetch them here—tonight.”

Marcelle bent forward listening intently; her lips parted,—a smouldering gleam in her black eyes.

“Will you tell the house-keeper that I should like to see this young woman when she comes here tonight? I—I—have a very valuable piece of lace slightly torn. I will pay her well—if she will mend it—at once.”

“Certainly,—I’ll gladly tell her, ma’am, the poor soul would be glad to get that work, I’m sure.”

“You must not forget,” said Marcelle, slipping a bill into the maid’s hand.

“I will bring her to your apartment myself, ma’am,” she replied.

Left to herself, Marcelle sat down and began to formulate a plan to outwit Daniel Weslow in his intention to adopt this strange young woman’s boy.

Marcelle had wealth aplenty at her command—the Rae million;—and she told herself money could accomplish anything—everything.

She would give the young woman to understand, by insinuations, if not in words, that the man who desired to take her little son from her, was a most desperate character;—all that was bad and untrustworthy; that his wealth was a myth, and, under his merciless brutality, the boy would not live a year. With such a picture before her, no woman would sign an adoption paper.

Should the woman show keen disappointment at the turn of her hopes, Marcelle intended to show great sympathy for her, and propose to become her benefactor herself,—if she, the old grand-ma, and the boy would leave San Francisco without an hour’s delay.

A goodly sum of ready cash, which she had about her, would cause her to accept. She would buy tickets for the trio to Chicago. She did not care what they did, or what became of them—if that distance divided them.

Counting her cash, she found she had a little over a thousand dollars about her. She would give them the entire amount, considering herself lucky if she got off that cheap.

Marcelle looked so bright and gay when Daniel met her at dinner that he looked at her in wonder. Her smile was sparkling, her laughter contagious and her merry wit spontaneous.

Daniel was not in love with Marcelle, but as he looked at her, he could not help but note she was an unusually attractive young woman—whom most any man would be proud of. He wished for her sake, that he could have more affection for her,—or, that she had elected to marry some other man who would be more suitable for her.

To her great surprise, he asked her if she would like to hear the concert which was to be given in the parlor that evening.

She was obliged to decline, though she would have given the world to have sat by his side the entire evening, but the matter on hand was by far more important;—it meant happiness, or unhappiness for her in her future.

The boy's love for Daniel, and his affection for the lad, were thorns in her heart;—it behooved her, in spite of anything else,—to get the boy out of the way.

After they had disappeared, let Daniel rave and storm as much as he liked, it would not mend matters for him. He would not be able, in all probability to trace their whereabouts.—He would think the mother had changed her mind about allowing a stranger to adopt her boy, and had gone away—that there might be no more about it.

Marcelle retired promptly to her room—to watch and await the coming of the mother of little Paul. She drew the pink silk shades closer over the electric bulbs that her face might be in as much shadow as possible.

“She must not recognize me—if she should ever see me again,” she ruminated, taking down her long coils of blue-black coffeured hair and drawing it back plainly from her forehead, pinning it back in a simple coil at the nape of her neck, and donning the simplest and least effective house gown in her wardrobe.

These arrangements had certainly metamorphosed her. Looking into the long pier glass, she exclaimed half aloud with a shudder, “I could not have believed I could have looked so old and unattractive;—I should not have known myself. The reflection in the mirror fascinated her.

At that moment, weak as she was, little Paul’s mother was putting on her hat and coat to carry the lace to the housekeeper of the Palace hotel. It was the first time she had come near disappointing in delivering her work.

“You are not fit to go, even now, dearie;—you should let me go in your stead,” declared Grand-ma, laying a detaining hand on the girl’s arm.

Lena smiled faintly. "I am inured to hardships—I'll not mind it; the walk will do me good."

"Not when you have just gotten out of a sick bed; if we hadn't a bite in the house to eat, that would be necessity enough," said Grand-ma, adding:—"Little Paul has slipped down to the door—to coax you to take him along."

"I shall *not* take him with me—unless he begs so hard I cannot find it in my heart to say him nay," replied Lena, a faint smile curving her lips as she turned away.

"I shall have some nice hot, nourishing soup for you dearie, when you get back," said Grandma. "I never council taking food late in the evening, but I make this an exception; something tells me you will be needful of it."

"How good you are to me grandma,—and to little Paul too," she murmured, kissing the wrinkled old face fondly? "This is grandma's birthday,—sixty to-day,—when one is so very, very old as that, she should do nothing but fold her toil-weary hands—and just—rest," she thought.

A moment later she was wending her way down the narrow stairs to the street.

CHAPTER XXVI

CAN ONE WHO HAS TRULY LOVED,—EVER FORGET?

“I’ll no say men are villaina a’
The real, hardened, wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked.”

PAULINE did not see little Paul when she reached the street, deciding she had missed him by his going up the rear stairs to their rooms.

The boy had not gone upstairs, but lay curled up in a large dry-goods box on the sidewalk, peering out of a knot-hole, watching for his mother, when two rough looking men, walking slowly, past, paused, resting their arms on the box which sheltered him.

The child afraid of rough men, kept very quiet, waiting for them to pass on. This they seemed in no hurry to do. There was that unmistakable something in both faces that awoke fear in the heart of the boy.

The heavier and darker of the two men was doing the talking;—the other, the listening.

“I’ll tell you what, Reardon,” said the dark man, bringing his heavy closed fist down fiercely upon the box, —“the fact of finding Weslow in San Francisco, will play havoc with our plans; he appears to have a strong notion of staying here permanently;—that must not be.—Tomorrow our great story of the great Alaska gold mining—get-rich-quick scheme, will be out in all the papers. It’s on the press, too late to hold it back.

Weslow will be the first one to see it, and characterize it as a nation wide swindle;—that means a prick in our toy balloon, and the collapse in an hour of the gigantic scheme which would have brought us in a fortune from the gullys and the guys in the course of a few days.”

“I feared the collapse of the thing the moment you told me Weslow was headed for this port. What do you propose to do about it, Boyd?”

“Weslow—must—not be in San Francisco when the morning papers come out;—that’s the long and the short of it.”

“What’s your plan to bring this about?” queried Reardon.

“He must go,—with no come-back to it. I’ve located the window of his room at the hotel;—I was giving that careful study when I discovered he comes out just before dinner, every night for a smoke—to a little jut of land a little distance from the hotel, sitting on a large rock.—He smokes and looks intently out to sea—sometimes an hour or more,—enjoying the solitude, as it were—for no one else seems to go there, save laborers, earlier in the day, engaged in repairing an adjacent stone break-water.”

“Well,” said Reardon, eyeing his companion steadily, “the plan.”

Boyd smiled cynically. “A time-bomb buried in the sand at his feet, Bing! and Weslow would never interfere with our affairs again.”

“Who will attend to this important part of your programme, Boyd.”

“You,” was the retort, “and you have not a moment to lose.”

“I refuse!” declared Reardon brusquely. “I take equal risks in the get-rich-quick scheme,—but your rough-neck plans,—Huh, you’ll get someone else to do. I am going at once on board the tug.”

The other argued; Reardon was steadfast. “I’ve made up my mind,” he said doggedly;—“I’m in the Alaska scheme with you, that settled, we part company for good and all.”

Boyd laughed loud and long. “Since when has Reardon, the worst crook in the west;—train hold-up man, forger of papers,—sinner in general—turned saint?” he sneered.

“My old mother, lying very ill in Oklahoma City,—has sent for me,” responded Reardon huskily, adding:—“I am going to her within the next few days. When I—stand in her presence—I’ll have shaken off the old life, and—approach her bedside—worthy of her forgiveness. She suspects I’ve not been going straight.”

“If we make a pile of money in the Alaska gold mine—get-rich-quick scheme,—maybe you’ll turn your share over to the heathen Chinees, or some charity,—eh? I fancy you’ll soon recover from this attack of—goodness;—You know:—

“When the devil got sick, the devil a monk would be;
When th’ devil got well, th’ devil a monk was he.”

“But,” continued Boyd, “if that’s th’ way you feel about it, I’ll attend to the little affair concerning Weslow, myself, you can watch the result from the deck

of the 'Mary Ann.' " So saying, Boyd turned on his heel, striding rapidly down the street;—his companion moving away in an opposite direction.

Little Paul had heard; not a word had escaped him; he knew all about bombs; all the urchins in Crow's Alley had heard the long-shoremen around that vicinity, discussing them, and the result of their having been planted on land as well as sea.

He gathered that the heavy, dark man meant ill to—Daddy. He remembered in that moment what had never occurred to him before;—that many gentlemen on the street, and in the restaurant, had called him—Mr. Weslow;—he had completely forgotten that until now.

A bomb was to be placed by the rock where he sat and smoked; that was quite enough for him to hear. He forgot all about wanting to go with his mother,—the one thought that filled his mind was to run to—Daddy—and tell him—what the men had said;—all he remembered of it was about the bomb. He knew where the place was, and thither he hurried as quickly as his little legs could carry him.

In the meantime, with swift strides, Boyd reached his objective point;—it annoyed him to see his tug boat "The Mary Ann," hugging the shore so closely; it was within easy calling distance. He hallowed to the mate to move back out of range of any rock splinters.

The mate nodded, but he had no intention of obeying that order, for they were making ready to come on shore presently.

Reardon had reached the tug, and was sitting moodily on deck, smoking a long, black cigar, too much engrossed in his own thoughts to even look up, or bother concerning what Boyd was giving directions about. Reardon was still a rogue, but—a repenting one. In summing up the situation, he had decided that the men who live by their wits, were always hanging onto the ragged edge of danger of discovery,—they could not look the world in the face, unafraid.

Boyd made all haste from the spot at which he had called out frowning grimly as he replaced his watch in his pocket.

He had traversed but a few rods, when, hurrying around a sudden turn in the path, he came face to face with a young woman advancing quite as quickly from the opposite direction.

He passed her.

What was there about that delicate face, framed in a sheen of golden hair that caused him to pause abruptly, and look back at her.

“Pauline! By all that is wonderful!” he exclaimed in amazement.

Pauline, for it was she, paused, and involuntarily glanced at the man who stood quite still regarding her,—uttering her name in a familiar voice.

“I see I am not recognized,” he said with a short rasping laugh.—“I do not wonder;—time has treated me roughly, playing havoc with me.”

She looked at the man in troubled wonder. She could not recall the rough, weather-beaten face, which the bristling black beard caused to appear formidable,

to say the least;—but—there was something familiar about the bold black eyes that held her spell-bound.

“So—you did not perish in the wreck,—as you allowed every one to assume!” he said gruffly—“I am pleased that you did not.”

Now she knew him, and the startled cry—“Hugh Boyd!” broke from her lips.

“The same, my dear Pauline,” he returned. “Our meeting at the French ball was rudely brought to an abrupt close that memorable evening;—let me see—how long ago was it,—some seven years ago, I fancy.”

Pauline was staring at him with horrified eyes.

“I have no wish to continue this conversation,” she returned, with dignity, “I had hoped we would never meet again.”—She was about to pass on, but he suddenly grasped her arm.

“Not so soon, my fair Pauline!” he cried with darkening brows. “Do you imagine for a moment that I shall permit you to leave me—until after we have had a long talk;—come to an understanding?”

“I have nothing to say to you, nor will I remain here; every word you utter is but an insult to my ears, Hugh Boyd.”

“This—from—a—girl—who once loved me—with all the intense love of her heart!” he sneered. “Who would have thought the love you then vowed you had for me,—could—ever die!”

“That belonged to the dead past,” declared Pauline haughtily,—“I soon found out what you were, and I thanked God that foolish,—girlish affair had been nipped in the bud.—When you tricked me with—those

forged papers,—the evening I went to you to execute a deed of mercy, honorably and nobly,—I discovered how low you had fallen,—to—deliberately cheat—a woman—leaving me—penniless, and I abhorred you, wondering how the good Lord lets such men—live.”

“Harsh words, Pauline,” he answered, but:—
“Sticks and stones might break my bones,—but words can never harm me.”

“Unhand me sir!” cried Pauline trembling with anger, “how dare you address one word to me,—after robbing me,—and—sending me out a wanderer in the world as well,—to live through it,—or die,—as Heaven saw fit.”—“Let go my arm!”

“You are giving me more blame than I am really entitled to, bad as you are making me out.—You shall not pass on until I have had my say,” he declared—
“and the first thing I want to impress upon you is,—the scheme of having you sign the wrong papers, was not my scheme,—but Reardon’s. He’s a lawyer you know,—and he had a deep grudge not only against Weslow,—but yourself as well;—I never fully understand exactly—why.”

“Reardon,—the lawyer—of—Oklahoma City!” she echoed, the memory of the last time she had ever seen him—when she had forcibly ejected him from the automobile, coming back to her with a rush.

“I was his tool—regarding those papers,” declared Boyd. “The fortune I reaped so unfairly, was lost at faro, over in Paris, in less than a year afterward, believe me. You will have it, I see, that I insulted you that evening at the French ball,—but I want you to

judge me fairly—impartially,—was it really an insult to you to crave to hold you, when I had loved so madly, and lost so, unfairly.—You who had loved me with all the sweet virgin love of your heart—in my arms in the dance—for just a few blissful moments? I am only human; I was mad at the sight of you;—mad at the thought you had passed out of my life—forever. My God! think Pauline, was my forcing you to dance with me—such a grievous wrong to you?”

She looked at him steadily; her blue eyes darkening with anger.

“As I have remarked—the past—is—past, Hugh Boyd. You have no part in my present life—nor—my—future.”

“That is what you say, I say differently. Looking at you,—hearing your voice again—even though it be in anger, is arousing all my old longing for you;—I did not know myself, then,—that I cared as much as I did.—You shall love me as you did in the old days.—You and you alone, Pauline, can—transform me from a sinner into as near a saint as it is possible for me to be;—isn’t that worth—trying.”

“Every word you utter is an insult,” she declared. “I am the wife of Daniel Weslow;—as such, I refuse to listen to another word, Hugh Boyd.”

“When did you see Weslow—to talk matters over with him?” he asked.

The question was put to her with such abruptness, she quite forgot she had the right of not answering him, and she replied in a voice fairly choking with stifled tears: “Not since he took me from the—ball—

room—and—you,—that night, a little over seven years ago.”

He looked at her aghast!—Was she attempting to deny that she knew what all San Francisco knew,—that Weslow was in the city, stopping at the very hotel she was advancing toward, when he intercepted her?

By dint of skilfully applied questioning,—he soon became convinced she was speaking the truth—they had not run across each other yet.

He also discovered that she had been very ill from the wreck for many weeks, directly after which,—she had left the scene of her sorrows,—coming as far as trains could carry her—to the extreme end of the far west,—and here she had been ever since—toiling for her support,—and—even at that moment—she was taking home some of the work she had just finished—to the house-keeper of the Palace hotel.

Somehow, Pauline could not bring herself to speak to this man of her little son, her little Paul.

“Somehow—I—believe you,” he said, “and on one condition I will let you go on your way, and that is, to tell me where you are living that I may come and talk over—a proposition to you. You may trust me this time,—Pauline,—I will come to your door, and if you say, ‘Come in,’ I will enter; if you say,—‘Stand outside, and say what you have come here to say,’—so be it.—outside I will stay. Is there anything I can say or do to cause you to believe me, Pauline?”

For a moment she was silent, and in that moment she was asking Heaven to guide and direct her,—and her God to take care of her. She wanted to get away

from him to have time to think. She wanted to hurry home to talk it over with Grandma—and abide by her decision after she had heard all.

Hesitatingly she gave him her address,—top floor, Crow's Alley.

He loosened his hold of her arm—thus freed, she sped on, realizing Boyd was still standing there watching after her.

Would he wait there to intercept her on her way back?—She knew of another route, by the big rock at the water's edge;—she would return that way, and by doing so, avoid him, she concluded.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LOVE OF A LITTLE CHILD

“Dear, forget me! Why should sorrow
O’er thy brow a shadow fling?
Love, forget me, and tomorrow
Brightly smile and sweetly sing;
Smile—tho’ I shall not be near thee.”

LITTLE Paul took the short cut to the big rock; great was his joy, on nearing it, to see his friend seated there. His back was toward him, and he was enveloped in a cloud of smoke from his cigar, but the boy knew him.

Daniel Weslow was looking far out over the waters, thinking of the lad when he suddenly appeared before him.

“Why, how are you, Sonny?” he exclaimed delightedly, bending forward and placing his hands on the boy’s shoulders. “I was just thinking about you—wishing I could see you, and lo! you suddenly appear before me in answer to my wish. But tell me, what brought you here? You are not in the habit of looking for me in this out of the way place.”

“I came for a big ball, daddy,” answered little Paul eagerly;—it’s there, somewhere by the big rock you’re sitting on.”

Daniel arose hastily, saying, somewhat mystified:—
“You’ve lost your ball, Sonny,—how did it get away here?”

"A big, ugly man hid it there," declared the little fellow anxiously.

"A man took it away from a mite of a chap like you, and hid it! echoed Daniel. "Just sit down on the sand here, and I'll look for it for you;—in case we don't find it, you're going to have a finer, bigger ball—so don't look so worried, Son."

"I've got t' get *that un*," declared Paul,—"*I* know where to find it an' you don't, Daddy."

Smiling, Daniel arose from the rock. It pleased him to humor the boy. He paced up and down, Meanwhile the boy began a vigorous search around the rock

"Better not waste any more time;—it don't seem to be there," he called out to little Paul, at length. But, at that moment, the urchin, with a cry of delight, espied the object of his search.

"Found it, eh?" said Daniel laughingly, as he saw the lad dragging at a rather good sized black ball which had been buried in the sand, directly beneath his feet—where he had been sitting.

"Stay there, Daddy," called the boy, "I'm getting it!"

Weslow knit his brows together angrily; he was wondering how a grown man could find it in his heart to wrest a lad's ball from him, because of his superior strength, and bury it where he would never be able to find it. He would have liked to have cuffed the fellow soundly, for thus tormenting a child. He was rather amused at the boy's pluck in determining to recover it unaided.

"Sonny," he called, "come here, I want to talk to

you.” To his amusement, the boy left the ball lying there, and came running to him.

“Yes, Daddy,” he said, looking up into Daniel’s face with a happy smile.

“We will walk up and down while we talk,” said Daniel, taking the little hand in his, and moving toward the mainland.

“I want you to tell me—if you missed me—during these few days you did not see me?” he interrogated. He had never waited for an answer so eagerly in all his life.

“Oh, yes!” declared little Paul, his grasp tightening around the strong hand that held his own. “I cried a lot, I wanted you so much.”

“You did!” exclaimed Daniel, a sudden thrill sweeping through his heart,—“Would you have been sorry—never to have seen me again?”

The blue eyes that looked up into his own, suddenly brimmed over with big tears that rolled down the round red cheeks.

“I would find you—sometime—wherever you went, daddy,—I would save every penny I could—until I had enough to go to look for you,” was the reply, uttered through sobs.

“Bless your dear little heart!” cried Daniel catching the boy in his arms and holding him close to his tumultuously beating heart. “You are the only human being in all this hard, cold world who has ever loved me;—ever longed for me to be near.” He kissed the little upturned face over and over again, noting that the youngster cuddled down contentedly in his embrace,—

as though the ship of his heart, and hopes had entered harbor.

“You are going to be my little boy from this time on,” said Daniel, gently as he placed him on his feet. “We will walk up and down while I tell you about it;—would you like that?”

Little Paul acquiesced gleefully, and for the time being, the ball was entirely forgotten by both.

“Your mother has consented that I may take you away with me when I go;” said Daniel, “and I’ll promise her that you shall not be obliged to remain in your new home—with me,—unless you are so perfectly happy. You would not want to go back to the home you now have, and the life you are now leading. We are going—the end of the week, Sonny.”

Little Paul clapped his hands delightedly.

“There’ll be a lady going with us,” he went on slowly, “but you must not mind that, my boy; I am sure you will be able to win your way to her heart—but it may take a little time, for she’s thinking—I have a little more affection in my heart for—you—than for her;—and I guess that’s about right,” he added soto-voice, and with a sigh that was half a laugh.

“Is th’ lady—Muzzy?” queried little Paul excitedly.

Daniel shook his head. “No,” he said slowly, “I have never seen your Muzzy; I’ve heard from the doctor who went to see you—and—her, that she is a very good woman; indeed,—she must be,—to be the mother of—you.”

“But what are you going to do with Muzzy?” insisted the boy earnestly.

“She’ll be taken care of, most comfortably;—she and your good grandmother; arrangements to that effect are under way, my boy, so that worry will not be on your mind,—either now,—or in the years to come. Can you comprehend?—I mean, can you understand all I am trying to explain to you?”

“I—think so,” replied the boy dubiously. “We are all going away from Crow’s Alley,—to live with you, daddy.”

“Would you—really want it so?” asked Daniel thoughtfully.

“Oh, yes, yes! that would make me an’ Muzzy and grandma oh, so happy,” cried the lad enthusiastically.

“I might have known it would end that way—when the time for parting came,—but then, after all—it is nature crying out in the heart of the boy,” he ruminated.—“I must change my plans that the two so near his heart can go along too, if I would make his happiness complete.” He continued:—

“I’ll have a talk with your mother myself, and see what can be done—I am sure some satisfactory arrangements can be arrived at. You see you have crept into my heart so completely, and wedged yourself so firmly there, I can’t part with you, my boy.”

Again the child’s clasp tightened around his hand—which had trembled a little in spite of his usual control of himself.

“You could see Muzzy right away,” declared little Paul, “she’s on her way to th’ big hotel to take home some work, an’ you can ask her.”

“Why, that is certainly fortunate,” replied Daniel,

"I understand she was too ill to be seen—that is the reason I delayed talking this matter over with her. Not having ever seen your mother, I would not know her;—you must come along with me and point her out to me."

"She isn't there yet; she's coming by the other road, and won't be there for an awful long time yet; can't we stay here until I catch sight of her?—she'll come by the stone wall over there."

"Yes, certainly—we'll stay right here by all means," replied Daniel—"that suits me perfectly. Your mother and I—and you, will get together right here—and have a long talk—and settle it some way to make—you—contented;—but—don't send me away—without you, will you, Sonny?"

"No," replied the boy firmly, "I want to be with you always and always, daddy dear," piped the childish voice tremulously.

Daniel Weslow looked down at him wistfully,—intently.

Marcelle had set her mind on going to Alaska on their wedding trip to look over his possessions there;—otherwise, at the eleventh hour, he might try once more to persuade her to remain with him, for the present in San Francisco. He had written a long letter to Mrs. Bemis, telling her all about his marriage which was so soon to take place,—and also of the little urchin he had come across—for whom he had developed such fondness, and had secured the right to adopt. The dear old friend of his early life might have the power, if any one could, to coax Marcelle into acquiescing—He expected Mrs. Bemis in a day or so.

The dear old soul might call it a mad notion—to adopt the child of a stranger;—a boy of whose parentage he knew absolutely nothing;—but—when she looked down into the innocent face of little Paul, her heart would warm to him instantaneously, and she would no longer wonder at the great attraction his personality caused in Daniel's lonely, seared heart.

Everything rested with Marcelle;—she was sure to raise a fine row if he took the boy's mother and grandmother along with them on their honeymoon trip,—and equally as big a row if he insisted that they pass their honeymoon at the hotel in San Francisco.

He depended upon Mrs. Bemis' ingenuity to find a way out of the tangle.

The boy's mother had already signed the adoption paper, which had gone back to his lawyer for the purpose of recording, and had been handed to him as he was leaving the hotel. He had intended examining it when he finished his cigar;—the unexpected appearance of little Paul had caused it to remain in his pocket unopened, until a more propitious time for reading it had arrived.

“That must be Muzzy now!” exclaimed the child, as he caught sight of a skirted figure approaching by the stone wall, some little distance off. “Wont you call her, Daddy, when she comes nearer, or shall I run and fetch her to you?”

Daniel looked in the direction indicated, and saw to his dismay, and annoyance—it was—Marcelle. He knew her walk, and the red parasol but too well.

She was looking in an opposite direction, and he was

quite sure she had not observed them. He did not intend that she should.

“That’s not your mother, Sonny,” he said quietly, “she’s the lady who is to go with us to Alaska.—The person—whom daddy—is to marry.”

The lad had keen eyesight; he had been peering hard at the approaching figure. Suddenly he turned to Daniel with a little cry of fright.

“She’s the one—who said I stole her purse—when I didn’t!” he whispered, shrinking close to Daniel for protection. “You wont let her harm me, will you, Daddy?”

“Certainly not!” responded Daniel, patting his head reassuringly,—“never while I live, shall any one mistreat you; a blow aimed at you—would hit me—first.”

To Daniel’s intense relief, Marcelle passed on without glancing in their direction;—the boy noticed this too. “She wont come out here,” he said,—“It looks that way,” returned Daniel, smiling down into the anxious, troubled little face that bore such a frightened expression.

The truth was, Marcelle was so intent upon getting back to the hotel in order not to miss the boy’s mother, who was to come to the housekeeper with the mended lace,—and so busy planning the inducements she should hold out to her—to leave San Francisco, at once,—that she did not look around and about her, or she could not have helped seeing Daniel Weslow and the urchin whom she so despised, who was clinging to his hand.

“I was successful in parting Daniel from Pauline—when I sent him that letter in a disguised hand,—direct-

ing him to find her—at the—French ball.—I will be successful in parting him from this street-gamin for whom he has developed such an unheard of fondness,” Marcelle mused, pressing her white teeth down so hard on her red lip that it showed the prints of it.

There was a second figure approaching, but as yet too far off for either Daniel or little Paul to distinguish. It was Pauline. Like Marcelle, she was walking slowly, her head bent down, for she was lost in deep thought.

It occurred to her that she must interview the stranger of whom her boy was so fond; and of whom he talked incessantly by day, and dreamed of by night. She had signed the adoption paper when she was so ill the lawyer’s clerk had had to hold the pen in her nerveless hand, and her eyes were so blurred by tears she could not discern a line of it.

Surely, it could make no material difference to this stranger if she were to tell him she had changed her mind, and, falling on her knees at his feet, beg him not to hold her to it—for she could not, even after all that was said and done—part with her darling boy,—and live.

Surely he would hear and heed the cry of a mother’s bleeding heart; she would work for little Paul to the last hour of her strength and life—she would live for him alone,—but—oh,—She COULD NOT—give him up.

She was not conscious of a dark form dogging her steps; it was Boyd;—He, too, was so engrossed in watching Pauline that he did not look either to the right—or to the left. He had mistrusted her statement that she

was going to the hotel for the purpose of carrying to the housekeeper, lace she had been engaged to mend.

“That’s all—a lie!” he muttered harshly, “Daniel Weslow is stopping there—it’s he she is going to see;—she has heard of the great wealth he has accumulated, and will effect a reconciliation with him. Women are mighty clever these days. But there shall be no making up between them;—I’ve already seen to that. Unless my plan miscarries,—and I do not see how it can,—Daniel Weslow will soon be out of my path—and hers.”

He laughed, the low, ugly laugh peculiar to him, rubbing the palms of his hands together, his eyes fixed on Pauline.

The years, and poverty had not made her the less dainty. She was still fair and lovely.

Boyd quickened his pace. He had decided she should not enter the hotel—he would prevent her from doing so.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVES TANGLED THREADS

“With her, my love, have the years done well?
Who shall answer,—who shall tell
Sweet things or sad—such as no man hears
May no tears fall—if tears ever fell
From eyes more dear to me than starriest spheres
These many years.”

As Marcelle and her red parasol drew nearer, so near that Daniel could have called to her without raising his voice overmuch, the boy turned suddenly to him, whispering piteously:—“Shall I run away before she sees—and—catches me? Oh, daddy, I’s so ’fraid of her!”

The terror in little Paul’s voice stabbed Daniel’s heart like the thrust of a knife. He wondered vaguely how they were ever to abide beneath the same roof in anything like harmony, when she disliked, so bitterly, the little fellow whom he so loved,—and who stood in such terror—of her.

Again he assured himself that he must depend upon the ingenious Mrs. Bemis to smooth a way out of the difficulty, and adjust the tangled thread.

“No, you mustn’t run away, Sonny,—always be a brave little man and face danger,—that’s what I always did.”

“But no lady ever hated you daddy, as that one does me!” persisted the boy.

A cloud crept over Daniel's fine face, his lips twitched. "I think there was a lady,—a beautiful lady—who once despised me,—though God knows—I, never knew—why,—for I would have given my very life to have—pleased her,—to have brought a smile to her lips, or one kind word."

The boy was looking up into his face in wonder. "Then I will care for you twice as much, because of the love you wanted—and did not get," whispered little Paul, stroking Daniel's hand, laying his red cheek caressingly against it.

Daniel was too moved for utterance at this token of affection, and the words that had sprung so quickly to those childish lips.

He caught the little fellow once more in his arms, burying his face in his clustering golden hair, his strong breast heaving convulsively.

"Bless you for those words, Sonny," he whispered brokenly. "Only God knows how I hunger for love—hunger for it as a starving man hungers for a morsel of food,—a drowning man a straw to cling to; I have missed it, somehow, all the way through. I was becoming hardened, thought I should finish that way,—until I met you, lad;—then the fountain of affection which I thought had dried up,—gushed forth from my heart stronger than ever. Life would be over for me—if—I lost you, Sonny."

"But you are not going to lose me, daddy," insisted little Paul, "when Muzzy comes along you are going to tell her how much you want me, and I want you—and—" suddenly he stopped short: "There she is

now!" he exclaimed with a cry of joy. "Mayn't I bring her here?"

"Yes," answered Daniel, inquiring in the next breath:—"Who is the man who has caught up to your mother, and is talking to her;—see, he has hold of her wrist,—and she appears to be endeavoring to wrench herself free from his hold, I should judge."

Little Paul's eyes followed his gaze; they were very discerning, even at that distance. He uttered a sharp cry of alarm, a cry loud and piercing.

"Oh, daddy!" he panted, "he's th' man who hid th' ball by the rock." Up to that moment little Paul had quite forgotten it. Like a flash he tore himself free from Daniel's detaining hand, flying with the speed of a startled swallow over the sand to the rock.

Daniel followed close at his heels surprised at the great terror he was exhibiting.

Pauline heard the piercing cry of her boy, and looking in the direction from whence it proceeded, observed Little Paul flying over the sand, closely pursued by a tall man who seemed to be gaining upon him at every step.

Another cry more piercing echoed over the sand, this time it, was from the lips of Pauline. "Unhand me!" she screamed, pointing with her disengaged hand to the two swiftly running figures of the boy and the man, "some one is about to harm my—child! Paul!—oh Paul! my darling! Mother is coming!"

"You don't mean to tell me you are the mother of—a child!" cried Boyd harshly. "Speak!—whose is it! I will—know!"

“Daniel’s—and mine!” she sobbed in terror. “Let me go or I shall scream for aid!”

Following her gaze, Boyd saw who was running with the boy.

“Weslow!” he ground out between his clenched teeth. “There’s a whole lot about this that I don’t understand, but I see it all now,—you had an appointment to meet him here;—you knew he always went out to the rock to smoke at about this time;—but there’s something else that you didn’t know;—and a mighty something it will prove to be,—killing in less than a minute from now—two birds—instead of one,—and, you are going to witness it from right where we are standing.”

Pauline tried to cry out, but no sound issued from her white lips.

“—A bomb lies at the bottom of the rock they are nearing, and where Weslow is wont to while the time away.”

“Weslow—her husband—was with little Paul!—the husband she had not known the whereabouts of in all these years! She heard, as though in a dream. She could not stop to argue with Boyd. He had spoken of a bomb, at the rock which her boy had reached,—with the sole purpose of terrifying her.

With superhuman effort she wrenched herself free from Boyd’s grasp screaming shrilly at the top of her voice, “Come here to mother, Paul!—come quickly to mother!”

She knew he heard, but, instead of obeying, he stooped to pick up something from the sand. Daniel who was

nearing the rock with swift steps, saw little Paul stoop, grasp the ball, which appeared to be quite heavy for his little arms!—In that awful instant, Daniel Weslow saw something that made the blood turn to ice in his veins, and his heart to stop beating; God!—it was a—bomb! his eyes bulged from their sockets, the cry of horror on his lips died away making no sound.

There was yet a rod or more of space for him to cover ere he could reach the boy's side, and tear it from him. He saw—and he wondered even in that instant of horror that he did not go mad at the sight,—that a thin line of smoke was issuing from the bomb,—another instant of time—and all would be over with the child who had turned to him a laughing face all unconscious of his danger.

In that moment Daniel's foot struck a jagged piece of rock and he was flung heavily upon his face upon the sand.

Little Paul had climbed to the highest ledge of the rock and, with all his strength flung the ball out into the water.

It fell directly on the deck of the *Mary Ann*. There was an instantaneous, frightful explosion, followed by shrieks, groans, and flying timbers. The *Mary Ann* plunged beam end down into the water, and began to settle.

The noise of the explosion brought the workmen who had been laboring on the stone wall, quickly to the spot, and at that instant Pauline reached her boy, falling in a dead faint as she felt the clasp of his warm arms about her neck.

Daniel Weslow had picked himself up, but with difficulty;—the fall had bruised, if not—sprained his ankle.

“The boy! where is he!” he cried out in an agonized voice.

At that moment he beheld him clasped close in a woman’s arms.

He remembered little Paul had said his mother was coming toward them, as he pointed to the figure of a woman approaching swiftly, he knew it must be she. He bent over her pityingly, to take the boy gently from her arms. One look at her face, and his own grew white as death, an awful cry breaking from his lips.

He drew back, his eyes fairly starting from their sockets. Could the grave give back its dead! Pauline—his wife—had lost her life in the terrible wreck of the Washington midnight Express—years ago.

“Pauline!—no, no!—it cannot be she!” he cried, great beads of perspiration gathering on his face and rolling like rain down his ashen cheeks.

Boyd, who had reached the spot on a run, was just in time to hear those words;—he knew by that, that Pauline and Weslow had not met since the fatal night she had left Washington. That he had believed her dead—and—she had NOT—undeceived him by making her presence known to him. A quick thought was born of this knowledge in his scheming brain—augmented by the sight of the blowing up of the Mary Ann by the boy, and by the bomb he had buried by the side of the rock to destroy the man who was now bending over Pauline, gazing down at her with bated breath.

In his consternation, and amazement, Daniel Weslow

had quite forgotten to summon aid to revive her. He quite believed himself to be the victim of a disordered optical illusion, or, suffering from a frightful dream from which he must awaken shortly.

With a fierce imprecation, Boyd sprang forward between Pauline and Weslow.

“So!” he cried, “Pauline has been unfortunate enough to be discovered by you;—therefore, the secret which we have kept hidden so successfully for nearly eight years is out;—She did not die in the wreck; we fled together;—What are you going to do about it?”

He uttered the falsehood boldly, realizing that Pauline, who was still unconscious, was unable to refute it. It was a trump card of his own making, spurious though it was, he meant to play it for all it was worth.

“Do!” echoed Daniel Weslow, his eyes blazing like coals of fire from his white face, “I intend to—kill you, or you shall kill me; we will have it out, man to man—here and now.”

“That suits me!” cried Boyd with an oath, following Weslow’s example of throwing off his coat and rolling up his sleeves.

At that moment a cry broke from the lips of little Paul.

The sound was like an electric shock to Daniel Weslow.

“The boy—!” he cried hoarsely; the balance of the sentence stuck in his throat and choked him;—he could not put the question into words, as he pointed to the lad who was beginning to sob hysterically over the unconscious form.

“Pauline’s—and—mine!” answered Boyd boldly, enjoying the intense suffering those words brought to Weslow; for a moment he quite believed they would take the very life from him, so keen was his anguish.

At that instant little Paul ran to Weslow, throwing his arms about his knees, and looking piteously up into his face.

“I can’t wake Muzzy up!” he whimpered, “wont you—try?”

Daniel Weslow looked down into the little upturned face, so stirred by emotion he could scarcely refrain from groaning aloud.

All in an instant he realized what the hitherto unexplainable reason was—that had drawn his heart so forcibly to this boy;—he was—Pauline’s! He had been blind not to see the great resemblance when the boy had looked up into his face with Pauline’s eyes,—her smile, the magic touch of her hands,—her voice, her soft arms around his neck.

This boy whom he had loved with a love that was next to divine,—this little lad whose companionship had been all in all to him, whom he had yearned for with a yearning and longing strong as life itself,—was—Pauline’s son—and—Boyd’s.

He wondered vaguely why he did not drop dead in the moment this cruel thing had been made known to him.

“Come to me this instant!” cried Boyd to the lad. “You belong with me—not with him! Obey me or you’ll get a flogging from me that you’ll not soon forget, I can tell you!”

“No, no!” exclaimed the boy in affright. “You put the bomb there,—I saw you.

“You wont let him hurt me, will you?” he added clinging closer to Weslow, still looking up into his face with tear wet eyes.

Daniel Weslow shook his head;—he could not answer him.

“A fine son to ask a stranger to protect him from his own father,” sneered Boyd with a harsh, coarse laugh. “His discipline has been neglected.”

Attaches from the hotel had come hurriedly for Pauline, carrying her there; Daniel heard them say the doctor had been sent for in all haste, and was on his way there. He wondered that Boyd showed so little interest, not even looking as they took her away, nor uttering the slightest command to them. Poor Pauline! poor unhappy girl! what a life she must have led with this inhuman beast;—what a price she must have paid for the folly of her infatuation for him; he could have shed tears of blood for pity for her.

“We’ll get the boy out of the way and settle our account in short order,” declared Boyd. Daniel Weslow bowed assent.

“I don’t want to go away, I want to stay wherever you are,” sobbed little Paul, clinging the closer to the one he loved so dearly.

Boyd hurled a fierce imprecation at the lad, and was about to speak;—Daniel held up his hand warningly.

“I am taking leave of the little fellow,” he said, striving to hide the anguish this knowledge brought him. “In a very few moments I will turn him over to you.”

“Well, be quick about it;—though I consider it is merely a play for time.”

Daniel Weslow did not hear, his thoughts were so confused.

Boyd was glad of a few minutes respite before the battle commenced;—it would give him time to think, and plan. Without the Mary Ann to make a quick getaway, he was in dangerous straits. A price was on his head not only for being the most daring boot-legger along the Pacific coast, but for other deeds as well. He decided as soon as he had finished Weslow, which he estimated would be in about three rounds at most, he would grab the boy as a means of defense, in case he was recognized and fired upon when he defied the order to surrender. Yes, the boy would make a capital shield.

Despite the rapid thinking he was doing, he kept a careful watch on Weslow and the boy, as he paced up and down between them and the hotel.

He expected they would come at any moment to fetch the boy to his mother—she must be regaining consciousness.

So wrapped up were Daniel and the boy in that blissful moment they were alone together,—they thought only of each other.

“Are you going to take Muzzy an’ me away, soon, Daddy?” he inquired wistfully, “I wish we could start right now.”

Daniel shook his head, laying his two hands on the boy’s shoulders. “You—you are not going away with me, lad,” he whispered in a choked voice—“I am going to give you back to your mother.” As he spoke, he took

from his pocket the adoption paper, and with hands that trembled, tore it into shreds.

“Ain’t I goin’ t’ be your little boy any more?” whispered little Paul.

Daniel shook his head, whispering in a tear choked voice:—

“No, Sonny, I’m going to send you back to your ma—and—pa.”

CHAPTER XXIX

FORGET ME—IF YOU CAN

“Oh love, young love, let saints and sinners Cavil as they will,
One throb of yours is worth
Whole worlds of ill.”

“AIN’T you goin’ t’ love me any more?” whispered little Paul looking up fearfully into the haggard face bending over him.

“Love you!” echoed Daniel with a heavy, labored sigh that seemed to almost tear into shreds the sore heart that beat in his bosom, “I shall love you, boy,—until the hour God calls me. You are more to me than anything else under the blue Heavens;—the life, heart, and soul of me. In the hour I lay dying,—your name will be on my lips. My last prayer will be:—God,—watch over little—Paul.”

“God wants YOU to watch over me—and Muzzy, too,” insisted the boy. “Ain’t we going away with you—like you said we were?”

Daniel shook his head sorrowfully, saying slowly:—
“It’s all over, lad,—that bright, sweet dream of ours,—all—over. There’s another who has a greater claim to you than I have.—I—I—didn’t know about—that,—all this time past;—that was kept from me;—they must have told you—not—to—tell. Is it not so?”

The boy looked puzzled; he clung the closer to Daniel, reiterating over and over again that he never wanted to leave him; that he wanted to go wherever *he* went. “I

only love Muzzy an' you, an' you an' Muzzy, an' Grandma, he whispered, laying his red, tear-wet cheek against Daniel's hand kissing it; and that touch of his lips, was like an electric current to the depths of his heart.

Daniel realized, as the child did not—it was the hour of parting; Boyd had approached, and stood near, grimly watching them, his brows darkening ominously, as his clenched fists twisted themselves together.

It was the hardest thing Daniel Weslow ever did in his life—to unclasp those little clinging hands from about his knees; it almost unmanned him to see the bitter tears roll down the boy's cheeks, and hear him sob wildly:—"Oh, daddy, daddy, don't send me from you. Your—little—boy,—your little—Sonny, loves you so."

With eyes blinded with tears which he could not repress, and hands that trembled like aspen leaves,—Daniel slowly unclasped the clutching little fingers, putting the boy from him, whispering brokenly:—"You must go to your—father,—he will take you—to your ma."

"Wont you kiss me, daddy, before you send me away,—if you are not going to see me any more," sighed little Paul.

"Better not;—I couldn't stand it," muttered Daniel with a catch in his voice as he put the boy hastily from him.

Boyd stepped forward, grasped the boy by the arm, flinging him so rudely from him the child fell face downward in the sand; fell and lay there.

Boyd had contemplated that such an action would

goad Weslow to the point of fury, and simultaneously both tore off their coats. The laborers who gathered around, making a ring about them, witnessed a battle royal such as they had never witnessed before.

Boyd had miscalculated the strength and staying powers of Daniel Weslow. He found he had an opponent to deal with, worthy of his skill.

Boyd was getting the worst of it when they heard the shouts of men running toward them.

“Police!” was the word that ran from lip to lip. They dragged the belligerents, by main force apart.

Boyd and Weslow sighted the police at the same instant.

Weslow reached for his handkerchief in his trouser hip pocket. Boyd mistook the action for an attempt on the part of Weslow to draw a weapon, and, quick as a flash, he drew his own revolver from his hip pocket, pointing it full at his opponent, and fired.

The police were near enough by this time to see exactly what had transpired. Boyd had caught sight of the foremost of them, and recognized them; they had long been searching for him;—now they had run him down to cover. He turned his gun upon them, shooting as he ran. His shots, like theirs went wide of the mark.

Suddenly, before any one could divine his intention, he seized little Paul, holding him up before him, with a demoniacal laugh.

“Fire!” he shouted, “the boy’ll be your target. In the moment they paused to consult as to how to proceed against this line of defence, Boyd suddenly wheeled about, and, still clutching the screaming child, sprinted

at a mad pace into the thick underbrush that lay to the right of them.

Adjacent, was an unused mine,—every man of them realized he was heading for that. If he plunged into it, taking the lad with him, it would mean instant death for both.

Daniel Weslow saw with horror and realized, before any one else did, what Boyd, the fiend incarnate, contemplated.

He knew that old mine better than anyone else did;—In earlier days he had worked in it,—later, owned it. In abandoning it, he had had it boarded over—but the years since then, and the storms had rendered the covering insecure. The city had taken over the mine long since, but had neglected to safeguard it.

Weslow saw by each turn Boyd made in the tangled-wood, he was surely making for the old, abandoned mine. “A truce!” he shouted. Halt! and make terms!”

Boyd flung back a volley of imprecations at his pursuers.

They dared not use their guns on account of the boy.

“You’ll never take me—alive!” Boyd shouted back at them. “Your promises are all lies;—You’ve got me, but I’ll die game. Ha, ha, Weslow, her boy goes with me.”

As he uttered the words, he reached the mouth of the yawning pit. The pursuing mob was now scarcely half a dozen rods away, headed by Weslow, who was shouting to Boyd he could name his own price to surrender—

with the boy. His freedom should be purchased with his entire fortune—if need be.”

Boyd heard, shrieking back at Weslow that ‘revenge was sweet—and he was playing his last trump.

Onward dashed the police in close pursuit. Only a second of time did Boyd waste in noting this, then, with the struggling, screaming, frantic child clutched tightly in his arms, he made the fatal plunge down into the depths of the old mine. Every man among the pursuers grew pale to the lips; they halted, looking mutely into each others face. Weslow was frantic with grief. “Ten thousand dollars to the man who will go down and recover the boy—alive—or dead!” he shouted. “Aye, I will double, quadruple it;—I will make the man wealthy for life. Which one of you will go down!”

He knew that almost to a man, each one of them had been employed in the mine in earlier days; they knew no fear.

“It would be as much as our lives are worth, boss,” they answered, addressing him by the old title. “The vents have been choked up for years,—no man could live two minutes in the foul gasses.”

“A rope, quick!” commanded Weslow, “I will go down myself!” In vain they attempted to dissuade him. “Get the rope!” he repeated in a voice which told them he would brook no interference.

A heavy rope, and lanterns were brought with alacrity. He had not an instant to lose in testing the strength of it to determine if it would bear the weight of the boy and himself.

Silently they adjusted it, shuddering, and almost cry-

ing with fear as he was lowered into the yawning, inky darkness, disappearing down the full length of the stanch rope, until even the lantern became but a mere speck, disappearing altogether from their strained gaze.

At that moment a messenger from the hotel came hastily toward them. "The young woman has regained consciousness, and is calling for her boy," he said, looking around and about him; I do not see a little boy,—where is he?"

The men looked at each other, one of them whispered in the man's ear: "Tell her the little fellow is coming; he will be there presently. Keep telling her that,—and tell the doctor who is with her, the men out on the sands would have him know—something has happened to the boy,—and it is wisest and best to give the poor mother a sleeping potion so she will not know for the next hour or so—what is transpiring."

That was the message the man took back to the doctor who was bending over Pauline, assuring her her boy would be placed in her arms directly. He gave her the sleeping potion, relieved when he saw her sink into a deep, peaceful slumber. It so happened that the doctor who responded to the hasty summons was—Doctor Northby. His amazement at meeting the girl he had so loved in the past, and to whose memory he had always been true, can better be imagined than described.

He saw that the fair young mother who had departed from his sister's home, with her baby in her arms, leaving no trace behind her, was more beautiful than ever, and his honest heart warmed anew to her.

He was puzzled and somewhat alarmed at the strange

message he had received regarding the boy. Had he strayed away?—he was most anxious to see him again; as an infant, he had loved him for his dear young, hapless mother's sake. A middle aged nurse had been assigned to look after Pauline. She wondered why the grave handsome doctor stood so long by the sofa on which his patient lay, sleeping so calmly. She saw no cause for him to remain, but was too wise to let him know she noticed it.

“A pretty young widow, even if she is encumbered with a young one, can get a single doctor away from us spinsters, every time,” she ruminated.

Leaving his patient in charge of the nurse which the hotel provided for emergencies, Dr. Northby started out to investigate the message concerning the boy. Attracted by the crowd of men, he was soon with the others at the mouth of the mine. He quickly learned the cause of the intense excitement. Thus ran the story, from lip to lip as it was related to him:—“The Mary Ann, a dare-devil, boot-legging craft, the most dangerous, as to Captain, and reckless crew that ever sailed western waters, was suddenly destroyed by the bursting of a bomb which they probably had on board;—The captain, who was hurrying along the sands with the intention of boarding her, suddenly ran afoul of a man walking leisurely along,—that man was, Daniel Weslow, the great Alaskan multi-millionaire who recognized, in some manner, the desperate boot-legger, and ordered him to surrender to the law;—According to the laborers who came running from their work, terrorized over the explosion,—they saw the two men engage in a hand to

hand battle. The boot-legger captain was getting the worst of it, when suddenly, breaking from his antagonist's hold, he seized a little boy who had been playing on the sand, and, holding the urchin between him and Weslow, that he might not attempt to use a gun, if he had one,—made for the deserted mine. As the crowd, who had recognized him, was following close at his heels with yells owing to a young laborer's wife whom it was known he had enticed away, and who had been seen on the Mary Ann. The boot-legger Captain knew if they were to lay hands on him, they'd lynch him on the spot. Then on came the police dashing like a whirlwind. Before any one could utter a cry,—still holding tightly on to the unfortunate child, and flinging back a taunting demaniac laugh, the boot-legger cleared the broken rails of the mine with a single bound, plunging, with his unfortunate victim, to death in the bottom of the shaft. The men went on to tell how the great multi-millionaire, Weslow, who had been walking on the sands, had offered a fortune to the man who would risk his life to go down to recover the child—what was left of him. As no one would venture, he called for a rope, and had just been lowered himself.

Dr. Northby was greatly affected;—he felt intuitively who the boy was, who had fallen a victim to the captain. How was the story to be unfolded,—and by whom,—to the hapless mother when she should awaken from her sleep. He knew that might be at any moment now,—He wished to Heaven he had given her a larger portion.

He was distressed beyond measure that his friend, Daniel Weslow, had gone down. He was thankful to be

on the spot if he should be drawn up in a dying condition,—to save him if it lay within mortal power.

He dispatched a messenger to the hotel for his medicine case, and awaited results, with the rest of them, at the mouth of the yawning pit.

“The rope is not—strong enough,” he heard the men whisper, the one to the other;—“it is creaking,—straining;—the man who has gone down is no light weight,”—Dr. Northby could only watch—and—wait.

Soon he noticed a commotion among the crowd about him. Looking up, he saw that it was caused by a woman hurrying toward them over the sands.

“It is—the—mother! She has come to search for—her—boy!” they whispered pityingly, “while some added under their breath, “God pity her!”

Dr. Northby knew it was—Lena, (as he still called her, knowing no other name)—and hurried toward her.

She recognized him at once. She did not stop to think, or wonder at his being away off in the west, but commenced to tell him incoherently about her little son—a boy of nearly eight now,—who had been playing on the sands, and picking up what he supposed was a nice big ball, he had thrown it out to sea;—it proved to be a bomb,—destroying a tug-boat lying at anchor close by. She had just reached her boy, who was terrorized by fright, clasping him in her arms—when she lost consciousness.

“Wont you come with me, Dr. Northby, and help me look for my little son?” she pleaded eagerly. “The hour is late—he is not used to being out at this time—alone.”

“Yes,” he answered, “I will look for him, but I would ask that you go back to the hotel and wait for—us—there.”

She shook her head emphatically. “No! no! I must search too! Wherever he is, even if he has fallen asleep somewhere, he will hear my voice and come running to me!” At that moment she espied the large crowd. Catching his arm with a pitiful cry, she looked up, with terror into his face.

“They—are—gathered—around something!—what is it!” she wailed in awful fear. “Come with me—it might be—” The rest of the sentence was drowned in the most piteous cry that ever broke from human lips, “Oh, my baby! mother’s little Paul! my darling, my—all!”

Dr. Northby could only look at her mutely; he dared not tell her the truth.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN LOVE PLEADS

“Forgive me, gentle heart, but while
You’ve bravely worked, I’ve been reflecting
That somewhere in this world of guile
There’s some one’s life needs your correcting.”

For an instant, as Daniel Weslow felt himself swung over the ledge of the old, deserted mine, with the rope about him, he realized the peril of his undertaking, but his staunch courage did not fail him; he grasped the rope and lantern tighter as he was whirled through space down into the dark abyss.

It seemed to him long, torturous hours were consumed in making the descent, but in reality it took but a few moments.

It was the deepest, as well as the oldest mine;—he knew every foot of it, from the top, hundreds of feet, to the miry bottom; there were three landings, as they called the shelving rocks that jutted out at irregular distances, though often they had threatened to demolish the cages which swung against them in going down, or coming up.

A prayer which ended in a sob trembled on his lips that they had not gone to the bottom,—which only God could have prevented.

He swung his lantern about, trying to peer into the dense darkness below. Its rays cast wierd shadows on

the mouldering walls, the vapors blurring his sight. He called the boy's name again, and yet again, but no answer came to him through the death-like silence save the vibration of his own hoarse voice—which sounded strangely mocking, as echoes of voices always do.

Suddenly he felt a jar, his feet had struck a wide ledge of rock;—the one nearest the surface some sixty feet down. He raised his lantern aloft, peering about him. To his surprise he saw that the few twigs he had remembered being there, had, in the years the mine had been abandoned, grown into great gnarled ropes of twisted branches, and, upon it, the objects of his search,—Boyd, and the boy.

It was by a miracle Boyd had caught it in his descent;—the boy lay unconscious at his feet.

A great cry of thankfulness rose to Daniel Weslow's lips;—a cry which Boyd misinterpreted as one of rage.

“So! you have risked much to capture me!” he shouted, “but you'll never get me alive;—move one step forward, and I hurl the boy to the bottom, following,—myself;—I know the crowd is waiting for me,—up there.”

“Listen—and heed my words!” said Daniel hoarsely, speaking with a degree of calmness by a mighty effort. “I came down to find the boy,—to bring him up alive or—dead. And—”

“Instead,” shrieked Boyd, “you encounter—*me*; and we are going to have it out, you and I—here and now;—nothing can save you from me. If I go to the bottom—you go with me, Weslow.—The boy blazing the trail for us.”

“This is no time, or place to renew strife—three lives at stake,” returned Daniel hoarsely. “With the deadly vapor about us, telling upon us with each instant,—for God’s sake let us temporize!”

A horrible laugh broke from Boyd’s lips; he reached suddenly for his hip pocket;—Daniel believed the action meant death for him;—instead, Boyd drew forth a flask, emptying what remained in it at a single draught—throwing the empty bottle with terrific force, aimed at Weslow’s face.

In the flickering light from the lantern he missed his aim by a hairbreadth, and they both heard it strike bottom with a faint, far off thud.

“Let us temporize,” shouted Daniel, beginning to feel the deadly effects of the poisonous gasses, “Let us save the boy, after that—it will not matter to me what happens. You should be more anxious than I—to save the life of your own—child whom I—have risked my life—to rescue. Let me make a proposition to you;—let us tie the rope about the boy—and send him up to safety; another moment—and his poor little life may pay the price of the delay. After he is out of the way,—it shall be as you say,—we will settle our account—the best man winning.” As he spoke, he unfastened the rope from his waist.

Boyd laughed, “Well, I’ll let the brat go up, as long as you are down here with me;—attend to him quickly before I change my mind, and take him to the bottom where both of us are going to go.”

As Daniel stooped to grasp the boy, with horrible cunning, Boyd leaned forward dealing his adversary a

heavy blow in the face, which he had intended should knock him from the ledge, down into the abyss below.

Daniel was stunned, but by superhuman effort regained both his slipping senses, and his slipping feet as well—remarking gaspingly, but with a degree of forced calmness:—“You can have it out with me—after we have sent up—YOUR—son!”

As quickly as his stiffening fingers could command themselves, he fastened the rope about the form of little Paul—so securely the knot could not slip and gave the rope the heavy twitch which had been agreed upon as the signal to be hoisted up, his heart nearly leaping from his body with anguish and suspense as he swung the boy into space.

His action had not been an instant too soon. Lunging forward, Boyd shrieked out fiercely:—

“I’ve changed my mind! He goes down with us!”

“You are too late to inflict your inhuman decision upon your innocent offspring, you demon!—Now for it!—It’s either your life—or mine, Boyd;—I’ve a long and bitter account to settle with you—and down here, in the bowels of the earth, we will fight to a finish;—it will be either your life—or mine;—we may die—together!”

Daniel waited long enough to see the little form disappear upward, out of the vision of his lantern, then he turned and faced the wretch who had ruined his life,—broken up his home,—crushed his heart, blighted all that was worth living for.

It was the wildest, bitterest, most frightful battle for supremacy that was even fought; it was a battle for

life—or—death. At length it ended suddenly by Boyd's foot slipping in the slime, and he fell to his knees, with Daniel, standing, like an avenging nemesis, bending over him.

"You've—won!—give me a kick and send me whirling down," gasped Boyd. He wondered vaguely why Daniel Weslow did not seize his opportunity—and comply. At that moment, the rope, which had been sent down again, swept Daniel's shoulder.

Boyd could hardly believe his ears when he heard his enemy say:—"I'll not send you down to the death you deserve, Boyd;—I'm going to—save you;—not for your *own* sake, for there is no punishment too severe for you to receive at my hands;—I'm going to save you—for the woman who loves you,—loves you so well she forsook husband and home to follow your miserable fortunes, and—for the reason greater still,—because you are the father of—her—child."

With hands that trembled from growing weakness from the poisonous gasses slowly overpowering him Daniel Weslow adjusted the rope about the man who had wronged him so deeply, and swung him over the ledge. He heard the creaking of the rope as those from above drew him upward.

He realized it would be five minutes of time ere the rope could descend again;—his breath,—and life,—could not last that long.

His strength from the strenuous encounter, had become impaired, he had not that to bank now. He sunk to his knees, his throbbing head fell upon them. He was losing power to think. Suddenly through his dazed

brain came the remembrance of the promise he had made to little Paul:—

“When my life is drifting out, and I am leaving this world,—my last thought will be of you. I will say to God:—watch over—and guard poor little—Paul,—the lad I have loved—and—died for.”

Was it only his fancy, or, did something red come flashing down through the inky darkness, slowly passing him.

He realized it was the rope again, with another lantern attached to it. By a superhuman effort he aroused himself. He had been content to die there, but he understood, God seemed to will it otherwise.

With shaking hands he grasped the rope, and adjusted it about his body. As he swung off into space, he realized something was terribly wrong; the knot—was—slipping.

Upward, inch by inch,—it seemed to take an eternity of time,—the rope with its human burden was being drawn upward. The strain upon the treacherous rope and the more treacherous knot was apparent in the straining and creaking.

It seemed the length of years to Daniel Weslow until he saw the blue sky like a tiny speck above him, in the semi-darkness of the starlit night. Each wrench of the rope meant nearer to life and the world.

There was another slip of the knot; Daniel felt it slowly but surely,—giving way,—he knew what it meant, and clinched his stiff bleeding fingers about the rope. He was within a few feet of the top, now, he could dis-

tinguish white agonized faces, but, Father in Heaven, his strength seemed to fail him.

They noticed the twitching of the rope, and seemed to realize at once, the cause of it.

“Holt tight!” they shouted, “a little more courage—and you are safe!”

Another moment that seemed the length of eternity, and his right hand loosened its hold, his paralyzed right arm fell heavily to his side.

He heard cries which were instantly suppressed, then—

Had God forsaken him?—his ieft hand began to slowly loosen, he could hold on—no—longer.

“God! — watch — over — little — Paul!” he gasped faintly.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEN LOVE HAS CONQUERED PRIDE AND ANGER

“My dearest! If the might
And tenderness of manly trust
Can bless thy life, thy love must
In darkness and in light,
Forever turn to me, sweetheart,
Thy goodness to requite.”

DR. NORTHBY had done his best to keep the hapless mother from rushing to where the crowd had gathered,—at the mouth of the pit; it was useless; wrenching herself free from his detaining hand, she was soon in their midst. She did not notice that they made way for her, strong men turning quickly away to hide the tears that had sprung to their eyes.

Dr. Northby had followed closely, again laying a detaining hand on her arm.

“My little boy is not here!” she murmured, turning away.

“Do you think you are strong enough to face and bear a great sorrow, my poor girl?” he whispered, making ready to catch her if she fell unconscious, or—dead—because of the words he was forced to speak.

“A—sorrow!” she repeated, studying his face with terror in her eyes. He reached out and caught both of her hands in his, steadying her. He saw, that by a mighty effort she was pulling herself together, slowly.

"Is it about my—little—Paul?" she whispered in a strained voice. He nodded, holding her death-cold hands tighter.

"Tell me quickly," she moaned, "quickly, while I have the strength to bear it; suspense is killing me."

Dr. Northby told her gently, the boy had fallen into a shallow part of the mine, and a heroic man had gone down to fetch him up.

She did not faint, or cry, or utter any moan as he had expected,—but stood before him like a statue carved in marble, incapable of speech or action;—he read the agony she was enduring, in her eyes, which had not, for an instant, left his sorrowful face.

"If my little boy does not come up,—mother will go down to him," she said, more to herself than to the doctor. She saw the rope in the hands of the stalwart men, and hurriedly crossed to them.

"Let me go down,—too!" she entreated.

"Certainly,—very—shortly," returned one of the men, looking knowingly at the crowd. The words sounded reassuring, as though there was no danger to speak of; she did not know what an effort it cost him to utter them,—and so carelessly.

She sunk on her knees beside the pit, Dr. Northby at her side,—watching.

What words can describe the anxiety of Pauline as she heard the men at the rope exclaim:—"The weight is so light—it must be—the boy!—he has made sure of his safety—first."

A mighty shout echoed over the sands, and far out over the water, as the little tousled head appeared, at

arm's length. The current of pure air was reviving him, he began to cry faintly.

Pauline heard the cry,—she knew he—*lived*. Her heart leaped in her bosom.

Strong, glad hands reached for him, lifted him over the ledge; another instant and he was in his mother's arms,—warm, living—unhurt.

Those gathered about her never forgot how she fell on her knees, thanking God—for the gift of her boy, to her.

It was with difficulty the men unfastened the rope from about little Paul, to send it down again, she held him clasped so closely. Dr. Northby was deeply affected as he watched.

She sat down by the edge of the mine, still holding her boy close, waiting to thank the stranger, with her heart in her words, for what he had done for the lad—and herself, when he should be drawn up.

She heard the men whisper ominously of the great strain on the rope; she heard it creak, and, on her knees among those rough, but kind hearted men, she prayed for the stranger's safety, each one, to a man, joining in, praying as they had never prayed before, tears falling like rain down their rough, toil-begrimed faces.

A score of strong hands bent to the task of lifting the heavy burden over the ledge to safety. In an instant the prayers turned to wild curses as they saw the man whom they had drawn to safety, was—the Boot-legger Captain!—the rascal who had lured the young wife of one of their number astray. With one

accord they were for pitching him headforemost back into the mine to die. Dr. Northby, who was bending over him, held up his hand, enjoining silence, even though the man had not lost consciousness.

“He is about to pass before a higher tribunal than that of men; he has hit his head against a jutting rock, and is done for,—‘vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.’—Let him die—in—peace; he has but a few moments at best—to—live.”

They made the dazed Pauline understand—*two* men were down in the mine;—they had pulled up the wrong man.

They laid him down so near Pauline she could have put out her hand and touched him. He was not unconscious;—he had heard the doctor’s words.

Raising his eyes with an effort—he beheld Pauline, and shuddered, whispering, “I—would have a few moments alone with her, men, I have a confession to make—to her.—Send the rope—and a lantern down quick again,—if you would save a worthier life than mine.”

The rope was quickly jerked from about Boyd, and lowered again, with increasing anxiety. There was not a man among that crowd of laborers who had not had a kindly word, and many of them a helping hand from Daniel Weslow, and they loved him as a brother.

The crowd, to a man,—all save Dr. Northby, left Boyd free to speak to Pauline, as he desired.

“I have been your evil genius,” he whispered, brokenly, “but in this, my last moments on earth,—forgive me.

“I was a defaulter,—thief, roue,—all that was bad when I first met you;—I wanted your wealth, there was no love in my heart then. I vowed vengeance upon Weslow when he gained what I had plotted and planned for, only to lose.

“Reardon, Weslow’s enemy, was a willing ally to aid me in my scheme to ruin the man you married, part you from him. I succeeded, Reardon drawing the papers which gave to me—your fortune, all of which I quickly squandered. Reardon, who was a train hold-up man out West, had a scheme to throw the guilt upon your husband, by slipping the spoils of a daring robbery—in which your father was a victim,—into Weslow’s pocket while he stood beside him, as he was making a farewell speech ere going to Washington. This he accomplished. He meant to cry out—thief! and demand that the police—should search every one—and Weslow—tho’ innocent would be found to have the goods—and—and——”

He got no further, his white lips moved, but no sound issued from them—He had paid the great debt. Passing from the anger of man—to face the anger of a Higher Power.

Pauline’s tears fell like rain onto the face of the wondering boy she clasped so closely.

Daniel was *innocent!*—innocent of the dreadful crime she had suspected him of; how she thanked her God that he never knew of what she accused him—in her suspicions.

It would have cut him to the heart. He had been from first to last,—honest, loving—and true. Oh, the

pity of it, that she had misjudged so noble a man—little Paul's father—so unjustly, so cruelly.

As Dr. Northby listened, he became astounded, for he learned in that moment this fair sweet woman—was the wife of his friend—Daniel Weslow. The young wife from whom he had become estranged—whom he believed had died in the wreck of the midnight Washington Express. In as few words as he could command, he told Pauline of the last treacherous act of the man lying dead at her feet, how he had leaped down into the mine carrying the boy with him. He unfolded to her the amazing news that Weslow, who was in San Francisco, and was at that moment on the sands, beholding the maniacal act, had leaped down into the mine after him, to save the boy, or—perish in the attempt;—adding, that it was—Weslow,—her husband—Daniel whom they were hoisting up.

To Pauline, the news was so overpowering, she lost consciousness, still clasping little Paul in her arms. At that moment he beheld two elderly women hurrying toward them over the sands. They proved to be Granny, who had come in search of Lena and the boy,—and Mrs. Bemis, who had but just arrived, and, standing at the hotel desk had overheard Granny's inquiries for her loved and lost ones, and offered to aid her in her search for them.

Mrs. Bemis had come on to San Francisco in obedience to Daniel's earnest request, to be present at his forth-coming wedding to Marcelle, not knowing how intensely she disliked the French beauty. Mrs. Bemis cherished a secret hope ever since she had heard about

it, and that was, to try to talk him out of it at the eleventh hour—if it were possible.

“To describe Mrs. Bemis’s amazement when she and Granny came face to face with Pauline—Pauline in the flesh, surely,—and the pretty lad who was Daniel all over again, as she remembered him in his childhood,—is most difficult to accomplish.

Mrs. Bemis’s agony was intense when she heard it was her Daniel who was being brought up on the creaking rope that had been lowered for him.

She heard them whisper the knot had slipped, and he must be holding on with cut and bleeding hands. This terrified her. She was glad, as was all, that Pauline was being carried to the hotel unconscious. They would soon know Daniel’s fate now,—whether it would be—life,—or,—if death was the price he had paid for saving the boy.

Meanwhile, Dr. Northby watched with bated breath at the mouth of the pit. Not a sound broke from the lips of the white faced men who bent to the rope—only their labored breathing broke the awful stillness. There was a quick simultaneous cry as Daniel’s head reached the level of the opening, for at that instant the rope slipped from his hand.

Strong arms, like a flash gripped him, and he was drawn quickly up, and onto the sands. In an instant Dr. Northby was kneeling beside him.

Daniel had not lost consciousness, despite the awful strain upon nerves and body. He was able to walk to the hotel with the doctor’s aid. Their progress was slow; Dr. Northby was glad this was so, he had so much

to unfold to him. Daniel Weslow listened like one in a dream;—his Pauline had NOT eloped with Boyd, that, from the wreck she had been brought directly to Northby's sister's home, where after some months of illness, her boy was born—Dr. Northby himself,—attending her. He told Daniel of how she and her baby had come alone to San Francisco, where she had lived with a kindly old widow ever since. Boyd having no part in her life, not knowing she had survived the wreck.

“You do not seem to comprehend the importance of all this, Weslow!” he exclaimed, slapping his friend heartily on the back, “the little fellow whom you have been so wonderfully interested in,—even to the point of arranging to adopt—is *your OWN SON*—Mrs. Weslow's—and—YOURS.

The effect of this disclosure was magical to Daniel.

“Where is—my—wife—and my little boy!—take me to them,” he whispered hoarsely, unsteadily, clutching Northby's arm.

Pauline and the boy were sitting in one of the little private parlors of the hotel, talking to Granny and Mrs. Bemis when they entered. The doctor beckoned the two women from the room, they obeyed with alacrity, making their exit from the nearest door.

Daniel stood quite still on the threshold, his heart in his eyes, regarding Pauline—and little Paul. Speech seemed to have suddenly left him. Pauline rose to her feet with a little cry regarding him timidly, while little Paul looked from the one to the other with round, wondering eyes — whispering — “Muzzy — there's — daddy!”

Daniel raised his arms slowly, and Pauline, with a little sob rushed into them, burying her face on her husband's faithful breast. Then he looked about for the one other being who made up his world, little Paul.

He was nowhere in sight. They began a frantic search for him, in the midst of it,—a very familiar voice piped out from behind the lace curtains behind which he had been hiding, watching all that was taking place:—
 “Ain't I goin' t' be your little boy any more?”

Daniel Weslow caught him in his left arm, straining him to his heart,—while his right held Pauline in an equally close embrace:—

“Yes, Sonny, my little man,—it's not *playing* daddy now; I'm your *real* daddy, to be loved by you, and your ma, forever more.”

Mrs. Bemis lost no time in hurrying to Marcelle's apartment, and acquainting her with the wonderful news about Pauline being alive—and in that very hotel; of Daniel's meeting with her, and their joyful reunion.

“You see, madame, that means that the wedding you contemplated with Mr. Daniel—is off. We are all going back to Oklahoma City to live. Oh, I had forgotten to tell you, they have a fine sturdy little son—Paul. Daniel's and Pauline's—we are all going back home, taking dear old Grandma along with us:—we will be the happiest family the world holds.”

“Stop!” commanded Marcelle, “I will hear no more, I take the next out-going steamer to—Paris;—tell them that;—also, that I shall wed a very old but wealthy man;—next to love, gold is sweet. I was mad

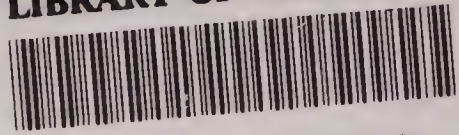
to leave gay Paree to follow the fortunes of a man who did not care."

Mrs. Bemis soon reported all that Marcelle had told her to Pauline. "There is one thing I want to say to you, my dear," she said, raising a warning finger,—
"Love your husband as he deserves, and yearns to be loved:—while I approve of Marble Maids,—I do not approve of WOODEN WIVES.—More often than not —they are responsible for—philandering husbands."

THE END.

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